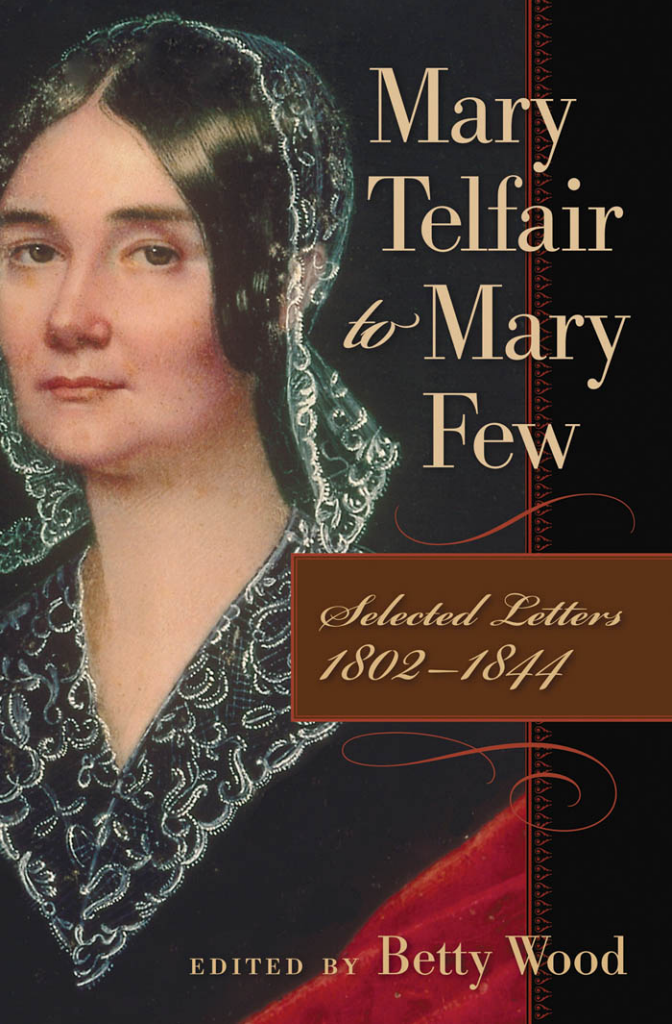
Mary Telfair to Mary Few
Selected Letters 1802–1844
EDITED BY Betty Wood

VISIT…

Mary Telfair to Mary Few

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Mary Telfair *to* Mary Few

Selected Letters, 1802-1844

EDITED BY Betty Wood

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FOR MY BROTHER Phil

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since her death in 1875 at the age of eighty-four, Mary Telfair has enjoyed a dual reputation as one of the best known, and at the same time one of the least known, of her generation of southern women. In Savannah, Georgia, where she lived for most of her adult life, her enduring fame is that of a cultural and charitable benefactress who bequeathed the Telfair family home, as well as much of her substantial fortune, to that city. In many ways, and especially during recent decades, the Telfair Museum of Art has been one of the most important foundations upon which Savannah has developed its flourishing tourist industry, something that surely would have delighted Mary Telfair, herself a nineteenth-century tourist par excellence.

The opulent fabrics and artifacts found in the building that Mary Telfair intended to stand as a permanent monument — a shrine even — to the memory of her family instantly testify to the wealth and high social status, if not necessarily the universal approbation, that she enjoyed throughout her long life. Hers was a life that began in 1791, a year after Georgia entered the Union, that experienced Civil War and in 1865 the surrender of her beloved Savannah to Sherman's army, and that ended a few months before the abandonment of Reconstruction. In more ways than one, Mary Telfair's life exemplified the changing political attitudes and fortunes of Savannah's elite during the century or so following the American Revolution.

Mary Telfair was born to parents who by the time of her birth had long since established for themselves a secure place in the upper echelons of Georgia's Lowcountry society. Through her father, Edward Telfair, she could lay genuine claim to being one of the most eminent daughters of the

American Revolution in that state.[1] By the time that war reached Georgia, Telfair was already well on the way to making a considerable fortune from various mercantile and slave-based plantation interests. During and after the war he pursued a glittering political career that, by the time of his death in 1807, had made him one of the most venerated heroes of the Revolution in Georgia. In 1807 the Georgia government commemorated Telfair by naming a county in his honor. Thanks to her mother, Sarah, whom Edward Telfair married in 1774, Mary was connected to the equally affluent and politically prestigious Gibbons and Jones families, both of which had long been influential in and around Savannah.

Throughout her long life Mary Telfair experienced the diverse benefits of affluence – not for one moment did she have to contemplate earning her own living – and by the 1840s, mainly through inheritance following the death of her parents and brothers, she had become an independently wealthy woman. Indeed, by 1850 she was one of the richest women in Georgia, if not the richest, and her assets comfortably exceeded those enjoyed by most of her male contemporaries in that state.

As for the majority of those who, through birth or marriage rather than through the mere acquisition of money, gained entrance into the socially exclusive circle that dominated every aspect of life in early National and antebellum Savannah and its surrounding countryside, Mary Telfair's wealth and the privileged lifestyle it sustained derived mainly from the ownership of extensive lands and the scores of enslaved women and men who worked them.[2] Whatever else she may have been, and regardless of her other interests and achievements, by the time she reached middle age Mary Telfair was not only a slaveholder in her own right but one of Georgia's preeminent slaveholders. It might be thought that these two interrelated facts alone would have marked her out long ago as a person worthy of at least some scholarly attention, but this has not been the case. In fact, until quite recently, as far as historians of nineteenth-century Georgia and the nineteenth-century South as a whole have been concerned, it was as if Mary Telfair had never existed. Indeed, until the close of the twentieth century, visitors to the Telfair Museum showed more interest in this extraordinary woman and became more knowledgeable about her as a result of touring her home than were professional historians who had spent years immersed in southern history.

It has to be said, of course, that until the late 1970s and early 1980s such scholarly neglect of southern women was the rule rather than the exception. What was true of Mary Telfair — to all intents and purposes her historical invisibility — was equally true of virtually every other early National and antebellum southern woman. White or black, free or enslaved, young or old, rich or poor — it made little or no difference: all nineteenth-century southern women enjoyed an equality of neglect in a canon of mostly male-generated historical literature that in the main was either oblivious of, or indifferent to, the deeply and racially gendered character of nineteenth-century southern society.

Perhaps because she never married — and in that sense was never a "plantation mistress" — Mary Telfair failed to secure for herself a place even in the pioneering work of scholars such as Anne Firor Scott, Catherine Clinton, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, and Deborah Gray White that did so much to add a gendered dimension to our understanding of the complexities that made up the human landscapes of the nineteenth-century South.[3]

Only very recently have unmarried women — of all social ranks but not yet of all ethnicities — begun to receive the detailed scholarly attention they so patently merit. Interestingly, it would not be until the year 2000, and then in her capacity as a "maiden aunt" rather than as an eminent female slaveholder, that detailed notice first began to be taken of Mary Telfair.[4] Somewhat ironically, perhaps, she was finally rescued from historical oblivion not so much by the efforts of professionally trained historians or scholars steeped in the feminist and gender methodologies of the late twentieth century, as by those of Charles J. Johnson Jr., a lawyer turned amateur historian.

Johnson's lengthy, and largely uncritical, biography negates the need for a detailed account of Telfair's life and times here. The main point of connection between Johnson's study and this volume is readily apparent: the many letters that Mary Telfair penned to her closest friend, Mary Few. These letters, which were exhaustively mined by Johnson, comprise one of the most remarkable literary exchanges between women of high social rank in the early National and antebellum periods.

Mary Few's social credentials were just as impeccable as those of Mary Telfair. She too could lay claim to being an illustrious daughter of the American Revolution, but in her case of the Revolution in New York as

well as in Georgia. Immediately upon his arrival in Georgia from North Carolina in 1776, her father, the twenty-eight year old William Few, became deeply immersed in the Patriot cause.[5] It was in this context that he first met Edward Telfair, and over the next few years the two men became not only close political allies but also very firm friends. Like Edward Telfair, the self-educated lawyer William Few, who saw active military service in the war, went on to carve out for himself an impressive political career. His greatest claim to enduring historical fame, and the thing that established his contemporary reputation on the evolving national political stage (as well as on a more local one) is that in 1787 he was one of the two delegates who signed the American Constitution on behalf of the state of Georgia.[6]

Following the ratification of the Constitution, Few was elected to the United States Congress as one of the first senators from Georgia. When his term ended in 1793 he returned to Georgia and was duly elected to serve in that state's Assembly. Three years later Few's political career took what to him must have been a most unexpected twist, and one that added to his growing disillusionment with his adopted state. Perhaps because of his lengthy absences from Georgia, in 1796 Few failed in his bid to secure reelection to the U.S. Senate. Significant compensation came, however, in the same year when he was appointed as a federal judge for the Georgia circuit, a post he held until 1799.

During the 1780s, when his burgeoning political career took him to New York and Philadelphia for often-lengthy periods, William Few met, and in 1788 married, Catherine Nicholson, the daughter of Commodore James Nicholson, a naval hero of the Revolutionary War.[7] Their first daughter, Frances, was born a year later, followed by Mary in 1790 and Matilda, who was born in Georgia, in 1794. A fourth child, Albert, who was probably named after his great-uncle Albert Gallatin, was born in 1797 but died when he was only thirteen years old.[8]

In 1799 William Few made a momentous decision that had enormous implications for the future relationship between one of his daughters and the daughter of two of his oldest friends, Edward and Sarah Telfair: he resigned his federal judgeship in Georgia and determined to make his home in New York. Few had arrived at the conclusion that he no longer had any political future – and indeed had no wish for one – in Georgia, the state with which his name had become synonymous over the previous quarter

of a century. He was determined to turn his back on Georgia, but not on his closest Georgian friends, the Telfairs. By the late 1790s New York could offer William Few and his wife something that Georgia could not: a more ideologically acceptable future for themselves and their children. Together with his political and judicial career, his marriage had elevated Few into the uppermost echelon of New York society. The reform-minded elite circles in which he and his wife moved meant full and frequent exposure to the antislavery ideology and politics that were thriving in New York at this time. These influences combined with Few's deeply held Methodist beliefs to shape what by 1799 had become his implacable opposition to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.[9] Few is not on record as having publicly questioned, let alone challenged, the institution of slavery during the years he spent in Georgia, and he had found it possible to sign the federal Constitution, with its compromises on the issues posed by slavery and the slave trade. But by the end of the eighteenth century he was a changed man – changed by New York. Only once more would he set foot in Georgia. In 1805 he returned to that state to dispose of the property he held there.

For Few and his wife it had become unthinkable to abandon New York and set up home in such a firmly entrenched slave society as Georgia had become.[10] Clearly, and despite their strong Methodist beliefs, it was equally unthinkable to them to return to that state as vocal anti-slavery crusaders. William and Catherine Few saw no reason, and had no wish, to turn themselves into social pariahs. Partly because of his own illustrious reputation and partly because of the Nicholson family's many elite connections, William Few went on to pursue an immensely successful political and business career in New York.[11] Mary Few and her two sisters, like Mary Telfair and her siblings, never experienced financial anxieties; they too lacked for nothing that money could buy.

In the meantime, back in Georgia, Edward and Sarah Telfair, much of whose growing fortune continued to derive from the institution of slavery, may have regretted their old friend's anti-slavery stance and his decision to base himself and his family permanently in New York, but they respected that decision and did not allow it to drive a wedge between them. The two families remained in touch, and in 1801, after having first sought William Few's advice on suitable institutions, they decided to send their daughter Mary and her younger brother, Alexander, to be educated in the North. The

Fews willingly agreed to take them in while they were being schooled, and it was during this time, just as she was entering her teen years, that Mary Telfair's lifelong friendship with the Few daughters, especially with Mary Few, took root and flourished.[12]

There was no certainty that the close relationship the two young schoolgirls formed at this time would survive Mary Telfair's return to Savannah, but it did.[13] For the remainder of the antebellum period – indeed, until their deaths in the 1870s – this most intimate of female friendships would be constantly reinforced and reaffirmed by periodic meetings. Unlike her sister Frances, who was willing to visit Savannah, Mary Few seems to have shared her father's reservations about Georgia, and despite Mary Telfair's pleadings she was most reluctant to travel south of Maryland. If the two women wished to meet, which clearly they did, then Mary Few was quite adamant: those meetings would take place in New York or elsewhere in the North, or not at all. Such was the importance of this friendship to Mary Telfair that she was always willing to accede to her friend's wish. But, like many of those in her elite social circle, Mary Telfair had reasons over and above friendship for wishing to abandon Savannah during the hot, humid, and often disease-ridden summer months. By the time she was in her late twenties, often chaperoned by her brother Alexander before his death in 1832, barely a summer passed without her traveling north from Savannah – sometimes overland and sometimes by sea, sometimes to visit family members in Philadelphia and friends in New York, and sometimes en route to various European destinations.[14]

We can, of course, never recapture the totality of the two women's conversations on those occasions when they did meet, although Mary Telfair mentions them often in her letters and valued them enormously. In fact, it was the often-lengthy periods they spent apart and the frequent letters they wrote to each other that reveal so very much not only about their lives and friendship but also about the lives and friendships of many others of their elite northern and southern female contemporaries.

Unfortunately we have only one side of this correspondence. It seems to have started in 1802, with a short note penned by Mary Telfair, and gathered momentum after 1811, the date of the earliest surviving full letter. Between 1811 and 1844, Mary Telfair wrote almost three hundred times to Mary Few, and her letters, which were of varying length, were spread fairly

evenly over these years. Although there were times when Mary Telfair chided her friend for being a negligent correspondent, we may safely conclude that Mary Few, who was a prolific letter writer to other close women friends, wrote back to her on a fairly regular basis.[15] If nothing else, the fact that she chose to keep the letters she received from Mary Telfair, presumably to read and reread over the months and years, testifies to her continuing affection for her childhood friend.[16] It is likely that upon Mary Few's death in 1873 her sister Frances, who had also maintained a close relationship with Mary Telfair for almost three-quarters of a century, preserved them.

It is also reasonable to assume that Mary Telfair did not casually discard the letters she received from Mary Few after a single reading, that she too hoarded them to savor at later dates, at times when she was particularly missing her greatest friend. What happened to these letters remains something of a mystery. Although it is possible that they survived, to be discovered at some future date, the greater likelihood is that they were destroyed. Mary Telfair herself may have done this – perhaps after Mary Few's death – for the simple reason that she wanted to make sure no one else's eyes – strangers' eyes – would be privy to her closest friend's most intimate thoughts and feelings – thoughts and feelings that also said an enormous amount about her own yearnings, her own innermost secrets. Unlike Mary Few, Mary Telfair, following the death of her sister Margaret in 1874, had no surviving sister or other close family member who would appreciate the value – if only the sentimental value – of these letters and think them worth saving. Or, as Charles Johnson Jr. has surmised, the probability is that Mary Few's letters were among papers destroyed by the employee of one of Mary Telfair's executors.[17] The man in question may have felt either that these deeply private missives, penned as they were by a woman, were trivial nonsense not worth saving for posterity or that some of their content was far too embarrassing to the memory of Mary Telfair to be allowed to enter the public domain.

The letters selected for inclusion in this volume are drawn from among those held by the Georgia Division of Archives and History, and they are entirely representative of both the content and the language employed in an entire correspondence that spanned almost half a century.[18] Perhaps more than anything else, it is the sheer survival of such intimate and revealing

letters over so lengthy a period that makes this collection such an extraordinarily rich source for elucidating many aspects of elite women's lives and relationships in the early National and antebellum United States.

First (and for some such as Johnson, foremost) these letters tell, in her own words, an elite southern woman's story – or at least those parts of her story that she thought significant enough to reveal to her closest friend – from her early teens until the eve of her old age. With their often-vivid descriptions of her activities and encounters, of her hopes and fears, they at least partially compensate for the fact that Mary Telfair seldom kept a daily journal. Rather than setting it down in a diary, as many other antebellum southern women did, it was in her letters to Mary Few that she felt able to reveal her innermost, her most private, self. It was to Mary Few, the woman whom in 1840, in a most memorable phrase, she described as her "Siamese Twin," that she felt able to expose her deepest secrets, her longings, her frustrations and, beginning with her father's death in 1807, the many personal sorrows that she continued to experience throughout her long life.[19]

There is no great mystery about the source of the metaphor chosen by Mary Telfair to describe her feelings toward Mary Few. During the 1830s Chang and Eng, Siamese-born conjoined twins, were brought to the United States and exhibited in towns and cities up and down the East Coast. Given their unashamedly highbrow cultural interests and tastes, it would have been highly surprising had either woman gone to see Chang and Eng in person, and there is no evidence to suggest that either of them did so. But both had heard of the twins and may well have seen contemporary woodcuts and lithographs – as well as written accounts – of them.[20] To the modern reader, Mary Telfair's use of the twins as an exemplar of her relationship with Mary Few conjures up a variety of images and possible interpretations: "Siamese twins" who, like Chang and Eng, were joined at the chest – close to the heart; a shared umbilical cord; the closest possible physical, emotional, and intellectual relationship; the utter impossibility of the one surviving independently of the other.

The choice of the Chang and Eng simile raises another fairly obvious possibility in the minds of modern readers: Precisely what was the nature of this particular female friendship? Was it – had it ever been – an explicitly sexual, as opposed to a purely platonic, relationship? For many recent

students of women's, gender, and gay and lesbian history, this has been the fundamental issue at the heart of their analyses of the same-sex friendships that thrived on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean during the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[21]

Despite Mary Telfair's evocative identification of Mary Few as her "Siamese Twin," there is nothing unique about the loving language – a language of courtship – that infuses her letters, especially those she wrote during her twenties and thirties.[22] The letters offer no firm evidence that her romantic posturing – her romantic dreams and perhaps her amorous fantasies – were ever anything more than that, that they were ever reciprocated or translated into either a transitory or a more permanent sexual relationship with Mary Few. Indeed, it would have been all the more surprising had unequivocal evidence of such a physical liaison found its way into her correspondence. As Mary Telfair herself pointed out, supposedly private letters were by no means exclusive to their elite recipients. In her case, for example, her mother, her brother Alexander, and her sisters, Sarah and Margaret, with whom she lived until their death, expected to be privy to any and all correspondence from Mary Few and her two sisters.[23] The fact of the matter is that we simply cannot tell from the extant evidence whether or not Mary Telfair and Mary Few were ever involved in youthful sexual experimentation or in a longer-term sexual relationship with one another.

One thing is clear enough, though. We know – through what she did see fit to write to Mary Few – that when it came to sexual matters and the sexual predilections of others, Mary Telfair may have been somewhat prudish but she was certainly not ignorant. For example, revealing her close knowledge of the longstanding "marriage" of Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, she strongly hinted to Mary Few that two of their mutual friends in Savannah might well be engaged in a similar lesbian relationship.[24] But even if they were not, she hinted that this could well be what many elite Savannians were thinking about their friends' tryst on Tybee Island. What Mary Telfair did not add in this particular letter – for the simple reason that there was no need for her to do so – is that these same Savannians would not necessarily have thought there was anything amiss, let alone anything unnatural or deviant, about this or similar female friendships.

As recent research has emphasized, the quest to unearth and to sepa-

rately categorize explicitly lesbian relationships is a modern, rather than a mid-nineteenth-century, preoccupation. Whatever – and arguably regardless of – their precise sexual nature, elite female friendships such as that between Mary Telfair and Mary Few were considered by most of their contemporaries to be perfectly normal and, just as long as discretion prevailed, socially acceptable. Yet, as Mary Telfair fully appreciated, these same contemporaries also displayed a prurient interest in such relationships; they speculated and gossiped among themselves about exactly what it was that even their closest friends might be up to behind closed doors. And this propensity for rumor and chitchat was something that greatly concerned her.

In her letters to Mary Few, Mary Telfair, who prized and jealousy guarded her own privacy, loved nothing better than to report – often in the most waspish language – the doings and sayings of their elite friends and acquaintances. Yet as she was forced to admit to Mary Few (and she could scarcely have been surprised by the fact), their relationship had not gone unnoticed in Savannah; they too were the subjects of gossip. As she explained to her friend, "I know from experience that it is impossible to do away with public opinion it is too inveterate."[25]

If nothing else, Mary Telfair's lifelong concern with maintaining her social respectability and ensuring that nothing would ever tarnish the Telfair name and reputation, ensured that caution and decorum would always be her watchwords. She seems to have taken enormous care to ensure that she left as few clues as possible about the exact nature of her relationship with Mary Few. Predictably, though, her letters delineate in graphic detail the meaning of that friendship to her, if not necessarily to Mary Few, and expose character traits that would have either confirmed or shattered contemporary perceptions of this most private of women.

Mary Telfair and Mary Few may or may not have been "Siamese Twins" in any sexual sense – it is simply impossible to tell – but Mary Telfair's perception of them as intellectual soul mates and kindred spirits ever since childhood shines through her lengthy correspondence. In this sense, in terms of the elite female intellectual worlds of the period, worlds that they both helped create and in which they so clearly thrived, their friendship was by no means unique or unusual. As Daniel Kilbride for one has pointed out, they were to be numbered among those many elite American women

who circulated in a cosmopolitan world, a world of highbrow culture that spatially embraced the United States and Western Europe, a world whose only meaningful frontiers before the growing sectional schisms of the 1840s and 1850s were socioeconomic and racial rather than political.[26]

As Mary Telfair's letters constantly reaffirm, elite women such as herself and Mary Few operated in what were largely, but by no means exclusively, female cosmopolitan worlds. These were worlds made up of overlapping groups of locally based and often unmarried women friends who interacted regularly with their like-minded but geographically distant counterparts through a combination of travel and letter writing. Neither intelligence nor wealth alone, but only a combination of these things, was sufficient to gain a woman admittance into these tightly knit circles of friendship. Social rank and shared intellectual interests, rather than common political or religious affiliations, were the all-important foundation stones upon which these elite friendships were based and the glue that held them together over time and space.

Mary Telfair's letters reveal a woman who in at least one aspect of her life – her northern friendships, particularly her friendship with Mary Few – was far from socially secure, far from socially self-confident, something that would surely have surprised her elite friends in and around Savannah. She was often self-deprecating – for example, not only about the worth of her opinions but also about her physical appearance – comparing herself unfavorably with Mary Few in a way that suggests she was seeking constant reassurance from her distant friend.[27] She applauded Mary Few's opinions and sought her advice on a range of subjects, giving the very firm impression that here was a friend whose views she valued above all others, that rightly or wrongly here was an intelligence and wisdom superior to her own. Although she held strong views of her own, seldom did she disagree with Mary Few about anybody or anything; this was a relationship in which, by design, Mary Telfair cast herself in the role of junior partner. As her correspondence reveals, she desperately wanted to please, felt that she must please Mary Few in order to sustain this, the most important of her friendships and, by extension, the particular entrée it offered her into elite northern society.

What Mary Telfair wanted, and arguably what in many ways defined her relationship with Mary Few, was to be accepted. This was something that,

given her wealth and, more importantly, her family connections, she could take for granted in the closed elite social world of Savannah, but not in her encounters with socially prominent northerners. In large part the acceptance she sought meant continually demonstrating – or trying to demonstrate – not her wealth, which was there for all to see, but her impeccable taste, her civility, and, not least of all, her intellectual sophistication.

That the life of the mind was equally important to Mary Telfair and Mary Few, and one of the firm foundations of their continuing friendship, is readily apparent from the former's letters. Both women had received the best education money could buy for girls in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century northern states; both were highly intelligent and inquisitive; but neither of them appears to have been particularly intellectual. To read Mary Telfair's letters to Mary Few, however, is to be presented with a comprehensive road map of the two women's mental world, their reading habits, and their mutual interests, over the best part of forty years. Although in some respects it changed over time, this was a mental world and an outlook on the world that in many of its fundamentals remained deeply conservative. Indeed, in Mary Telfair's case it was a world that in part seemed to be frozen in an earlier time.

In many ways there was nothing at all exceptional about Mary Telfair's intellectual interests and literary preferences. As Michael O'Brien has recently reminded us, like so many other elite southern women of her age, the intellectual world she inhabited – and with help from Mary Few continued to create for herself – was one that to a considerable degree was forced upon her by prevailing gender and social assumptions and conventions. In the Georgia Lowcountry, as well as in other parts of the early National and antebellum South, the avowedly and unashamedly intellectual woman was to be scorned rather than praised; there was a clearly delineated understanding of the kind of literary works that were and were not suitable reading for women.[28] Throughout her long life, Mary Telfair seems to have conformed very closely indeed to these intellectually constricting demands. Highly intelligent she may have been, but, by no means atypically among elite southern women, intellectually rebellious she most certainly was not.

Given her Presbyterian and Scottish roots, about which she remained inordinately proud, and the reading habits instilled in her as a young girl by her parents and teachers, it is scarcely surprising that the Bible, especially

the Old Testament, and the romanticism of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns loom as large as they do in her letters to Mary Few. Similarly, she often dipped into the works of various eighteenth-century British poets – mainly Cowper and Gay – particularly when she wished to convey her romantic feelings toward her friend. Sometimes acting upon Mary Few's recommendations, she came to revel in the works of such literary luminaries as Byron and Lady Caroline Lamb, and during the 1820s and 1830s she became fully caught up in the Romantic imagination of European authors such as Madame de Staël. Almost invariably the novels she read had been penned by Europeans; it was not until the late 1830s and early 1840s that she began to show any significant interest in American authors such as Washington Irving, and even then not an enormous amount of interest.

Evidently Mary Telfair wished to demonstrate to Mary Few that she was not only widely read but also au fait with the latest, the most fashionable, authors and their works, although her letters are not characterized by thoughtful critiques or detailed commentaries on what she had read. Rather – and perhaps in a somewhat pretentious fashion – her correspondence is peppered with often brief (and sometimes misremembered) quotations from her favorite authors. She had the works of those authors at hand but clearly did not always bother to consult them. Similarly, she seems not to have felt the need to consult a dictionary.[29] Given the quality of her education, Mary Telfair's spelling and syntax can best be described as slapdash. For example, her spelling of some words was inconsistent, as was her punctuation and use of the upper and lower case. Although the overall impression is that most of her letters were written in haste, this was a lady of leisure who had all the time in the world when it came to putting pen to paper.

There is nothing at all pompous or casual about one topic that from first to last dominated Mary Telfair's correspondence with Mary Few – family matters. That Mary Telfair felt deep affection for all the members of the Few family, and that until his death in 1828 she saw William Few very much as a substitute father figure, is readily evident from her letters. But her letters also offer compelling insights into her deep affection for, and her relationships with, her siblings – her elder brothers, Josiah, Thomas, and Alexander, and her younger sisters, Sarah and Margaret.[30] It is evident from her early letters that she was very close indeed to her three brothers.

Each of the Telfair sons had been sent north for an education that would qualify him to follow in his father's political footsteps, but circumstances conspired to ensure that none of them would come close to attaining his eminence. Josiah, who according to his sister was something of a recluse, preferring life on one of the family plantations to life in Savannah, died of a fever in 1816 at the early age of thirty-two. Two years later the then thirty-one-year-old Thomas Telfair, who had served in the United States Congress from 1813 to 1817 and who seemed set for a sparkling political career, also died unexpectedly, leaving a widow and two young children.[31]

Not least because of the time they had spent together as children in the North, Mary Telfair and her brother Alexander, who was just two years older than she, had always been particularly close, and they became closer still following the death of their brothers. Alexander, who never married, lived in Savannah with Mary and their two sisters – Sarah, who married Captain George Haig in 1815, and Margaret, who remained unmarried until 1842 when, following a whirlwind romance, she married the scholar and diplomat William Brown Hodgson.[32] It is evident from her letters that, fond as she was of her two sisters, Mary Telfair absolutely adored and idolized Alexander. When he died in 1832 in Winchester, Virginia, en route home to Georgia following a visit to the North, the bottom seemed to have fallen out of her world; she was virtually inconsolable. Perhaps her only solace was that she had helped to nurse Alexander during what proved to be his final illness.[33]

Beginning with her father's death in 1807, the deaths of many of her family members and close friends, often at an unexpectedly early age, punctuated Mary Telfair's life at regular and often extremely short intervals. Her letters eloquently testify to the way in which death and disease did not discriminate according to wealth and privilege in the early National and antebellum South. Those closest to her died from fevers and agues for which contemporary medicine had no answer; women died in childbirth; at least one of her friends had what must have been an agonizing death undergoing major surgery without the benefit of anesthetic; and in 1838 many of those on board the ill-fated *Pulaski* were well known to her.[34] In this context any sympathy the modern reader might feel for Mary Telfair could well be tempered by the fact that, in her letters to Mary Few at any rate, she seems oblivious to the fact that the thousands of enslaved peo-

ple owned by her family and friends experienced loss and grief on a scale similar to her own.

During the 1830s, and no doubt prompted more than anything else by Alexander's death and a heightened awareness of her own mortality, two new interests began to infuse, and indeed to dominate, the content of Mary Telfair's letters to Mary Few. Religious tracts and sermons began to be featured more and more prominently. Her transatlantic travels, particularly to England, brought her into close personal contact with several European churchmen, some of whom, such as the nonconformist William Jay of Bath, she greatly admired.[35] Ever the staunch Presbyterian, Mary Telfair was nonetheless willing to cast her net widely in her search for the religious comfort, consolation, and explanation that she so desperately sought.

Mary Telfair's second new interest – or as she saw it, her familial responsibility – had to do with life rather than death. During the 1820s she became increasingly concerned with the appropriate education of her two nieces, Mary Eliza Telfair, born in 1813, and Margaret Long Telfair, born three years later. Normally this would have been the responsibility of their parents, Thomas and Margaret Long Telfair, but Thomas's death in 1818, and Mary's low opinion of her sister-in-law's ability to make the appropriate choices for her daughters, led Mary to take charge of matters. This interest in female education would continue through the 1830s with the birth of her grandniece Alberta in 1834. Once again, death prompted Mary Telfair's intervention. Alberta's father, Pierce Cobb, died a few months after his daughter's birth; her mother, Mary Eliza Telfair Cobb, died in 1839. To all intents and purposes, Mary Telfair adopted her grandniece.

As far as Mary Telfair was concerned, assuming the responsibility for the education of her nieces and subsequently her grandniece was an obligation but by no means an unwelcome chore. It was this specific concern with education that sparked a more general conversation with Mary Few about the most desirable forms and functions of female education. From the outset, though, this was a conversation grounded not in the models posited by Benjamin Rush and his republican successors but in the works and theories of a cluster of English women writers, most notably Maria Edgeworth and Hannah More.[36] Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the radical feminism of Mary Wollstonecraft did not loom large in the authorities consulted by the socially conservative Mary Telfair.

The continuing dialogue between Mary Telfair and Mary Few about the theory, practice, and purpose of female education also highlights something over and above their apparent preference for the ideas on that subject advocated by more moderate English women writers: what to modern readers might seem to be altogether surprising gaps in their correspondence. There was a range of matters that either did not capture their interest and imagination or that they felt unable or unwilling to talk about to one another, at least in the semi-privacy of their letters, presumably for fear of jeopardizing their friendship. For example, given their keen interest in female education as well as their deep commitment to "single blessedness," one might have expected the two friends to have something to say to one another about the broader issue of women's political rights, but this was not a theme they pursued at any length or in any great depth, at least not in their correspondence down to the early 1840s.

Insofar as Mary Telfair displayed any concern at all with the rights of women, it was not with advancing their political rights but with securing their right, if they so chose, to enjoy "single blessedness." From the mid-1810s, the institution of marriage and its effects on women and men were central and continuing themes in her correspondence with Mary Few. As she explained to her friend in 1814, she was "too great a lover of *liberty* to resign it," but this did not mean that she was "an enemy to the *holy institution*" of marriage. On the contrary, she greatly approved of marriage, provided always that couples entered "into it from disinterested affection and there exists a congeniality of character." These were the yardsticks against which Mary Telfair continued to judge the marriages of her family members and friends and the morality and behavior of the women and men in her elite social circle. Most were found wanting. As her letters to Mary Few reveal, not many "came up to my idea of a *rational* pair."[37] If Mary Telfair ever fell in love with a man, there is no indication of it in her letters to Mary Few. Neither is there any suggestion that she was ever placed under significant parental pressure to marry.

As Christine Jacobson Carter has quite rightly pointed out, like many other unmarried women in the antebellum Lowcountry, Mary Telfair saw no fundamental conflict between "single blessedness" and the contemporary elite ideal of marriage and the patriarchal family as the necessary foundation stones of an ordered and orderly society. The one proviso was

that whenever necessary, as with Mary Telfair's central role in the education of her nieces and grandniece, single women must assume the crucial social duty of offering whatever material support and moral guidance they could to their kith and kin. Given this, the right of "single blessedness" and the degree of autonomy it offered to women, or at least to wealthy women like Mary Telfair, could not only comfortably coexist alongside the ideal of family but could also serve the socially vital and deeply conservative function of transforming that ideal into sustainable social practice.[38]

If the issue of political rights for women did not find a central place in the correspondence between Mary Telfair and Mary Few, much the same was true of politics more generally. Principally because of their visits to Europe, rather than because of anything they read during the late 1830s and early 1840s, the two women began to mull over the comparative merits of republican and monarchical governments and societies. But if Mary Telfair's letters are anything to go by, they displayed little or no interest in the writings of political and social theorists, American or European, past or present, on these matters. Similarly – and bearing in mind that through family and friendship they had always been closely connected to some of the most influential politicians and jurists of their day – following the War of 1812 they seldom exchanged either news or opinions about developments in the local, national, or international worlds in which they circulated so frequently and so freely. Successive presidential and senatorial campaigns and elections, for example, came and went largely unremarked upon by the two friends in their letters, as did such potentially divisive issues as the Missouri Compromise and the Nullification Crisis.[39]

One might have thought that when Mary Telfair visited Washington, D.C., in the early 1840s, and like so many other elite women went to listen to a senatorial debate, her report to Mary Few would have included at least a brief mention of the topic or topics she had heard discussed, but it did not. Only two things about her day out at the seat of national government did she think worth relating to her friend. The first, reflecting a social snobbishness that would have been all too familiar to most of those who knew her well, was that her presence, her elite social status, had been satisfactorily recognized and acknowledged by Letitia Tyler, the president's wife, with a nod of the head. Second, she reported not on the merits of what the senators who had spoken said but on the quality of their oratorical skills.[40]

The antebellum friendships of elite southern and northern women may well have constituted a vitally important intersectional bridge, but, as far as the male-dominated world of high politics was concerned, Mary Telfair and Mary Few seem to have been more concerned with style than with substance.

It may well have been the case, of course, that by the early 1840s the two friends were becoming increasingly conscious of the ways in which elite female friendships that straddled regional boundaries, even such a close friendship as theirs, might not be able to remain entirely immune to the era's increasingly partisan sectional politics. Both might have believed that, in the interest of continuing their friendship, some things, some opinions, must remain unspoken. In fact, it seems that for both women this had always been true of the one – and perhaps only – thing that threatened to tear apart their friendship, the institution of slavery. On a very personal level, their divided views on slavery were something that both women and their families had been forced to contend with since 1799, when William Few and his wife decided not to return to Georgia.

From the outset of their friendship, from the time of her very first surviving note to Mary Few in 1811, Mary Telfair's letters strongly suggest that, like their parents before them, the two women and their close mutual friends in both North and South negotiated the many issues posed by slavery primarily by ignoring them. As we have seen, it was almost certainly her distaste for slavery that accounted for Mary Few's reluctance to visit Savannah. It is also noteworthy that Mary Telfair's letters contain relatively few references to their mutual northern friends who had traveled south to visit her. In terms of friendship, the flow of elite women travelers was predominantly in the other direction. Mary Telfair needed little encouragement to head north, but it seems that increasingly her northern friends were placing the onus on her to maintain these close personal ties. As far as such close friends as Mary Few were concerned, slavery, and Mary Telfair's deep involvement in that institution, were far easier to turn a blind eye to, far easier to ignore, and perhaps far easier to criticize, in New York and Boston than in Savannah.

Seemingly by intention, it is enormously difficult to tell from her letters that Mary Telfair was in fact a slaveholder, let alone one of the most prominent slaveholders in Georgia. Her correspondence with Mary Few remains

largely silent on the management of the Telfair plantations that she and her sisters inherited upon the death of their brother Alexander. She rarely mentioned enslaved people, and when she did she tended to employ the label "servant" rather than "slave." When she referred to particular individuals – usually house slaves – it was by their name only. It was, of course, hardly necessary for her to mention that those she depicted in this way were enslaved: Mary Few knew Mary Telfair and her domestic arrangements well enough to know what she meant.

On those rare occasions when individual enslaved people appeared in Mary Telfair's letters, they were usually portrayed in the worst possible light – as irresponsible, as buffoons, as showing little if any initiative, and all in all as burdens on their owners. For example, she joked to Mary Few about the way in which her "old Gardener" had provided her with "a specimen of the *metaphorical*" when he referred to the grape matting used to protect delicate plants from the cold as "bonnets."[41] Then there was the case of the unnamed coachman who was so drunk that he fell off his seat, leaving Mary and Alexander Telfair trapped inside a carriage that was careening wildly through the streets of Savannah. On this occasion Mary depicted herself as a heroine – she, rather than Alexander, had "presence of mind enough to order our footman to run" and stop the horses. This "he did to my surprise."[42] Clearly, what surprised her was to find an enslaved person displaying such initiative and, it might be added, personal bravery, on her and her brother's behalf.

Elsewhere in her correspondence with Mary Few she portrayed herself as one who took what might be described as selfless maternalistic care of at least some of the enslaved people who toiled for her and her family. In the summer of 1839, for example, she reported that she had spent a morning cutting out "ten Waistcoats & expect to continue the trade for several days." But these garments, which were intended as "Christmas presents," presumably for favored male slaves, would be "made up by one of our Femme de Chambre during our absence." As she explained to her friend, "My life would stagnate if I did not employ my hands & fingers a little for others."[43] She was also keen to let Mary Few know that at Christmastime it was "a custom" in the Telfair family for "us to cook a large dinner for our servants each has the privilege of inviting their friends – so they keep the festival and are made happy by it."[44] The inference is that she and her sisters pre-

pared this meal themselves, which may have been the case, but the greater likelihood is that they had this dinner cooked by outside caterers.

Mary Telfair certainly seems to have believed that the enslaved people who worked for her and her family appreciated these maternal acts, and that despite their foibles and weaknesses they were totally devoted to her and her family. As she remarked to Mary Few, upon their return to Savannah in 1842 after a lengthy sojourn in Europe she, her newly married sister Margaret, and brother-in-law William Brown Hodgson were greeted by "our Servants, who seemed quite overcome by the sight of us – They said it seemed to them as if we had all passed away – they could not bear to look at the house. I never knew before how much they valued us."[45]

Mary Telfair never presented her friend Mary Few with a comprehensive defense of slavery, and neither did she express any serious qualms or misgivings, let alone guilt, about the brutal institution that fueled her own lavish lifestyle. This virtual silence seems to indicate that – before the mid-1840s at any rate – she was not coming under serious pressure from either Mary Few or any other of her northern women friends to at least consider the morality of her own slaveholding. Several of the women in her northern circle of friends may well have abhorred slavery, but it seems that they were reluctant to let that institution rupture their friendship with her. Apparently this was one trans-sectional set of elite women's friendships that continued to flourish, even as a growing number of elite and bourgeois northern women were becoming increasingly involved in the antislavery crusade.

Unfortunately we have little firm evidence that would allow us to say with certainty how this particular group of friends, and more particularly the lengthy friendship of Mary Telfair and Mary Few, negotiated the evermore charged sectional politics of the late 1840s and 1850s and the outbreak of war in 1861. The latest date on a letter in the William Few Collection written by Mary Telfair to Mary Few is 28 April 1844.[46]

We can, however, be certain of two things: that this particular letter did not mark an irreparable breach in their friendship, and that neither was it the last to wing its way from Georgia to New York. There is no suggestion in this letter, or in any of those immediately preceding it, that the two friends had fallen out or were about to fall out over slavery or anything else. We can safely assume that they continued to correspond with

one another. It is also evident that Mary Telfair was receiving news about the Few sisters from other sources, at least until war broke out.[47] Early in 1855, for example, she reported to a friend of hers in Sparta, Georgia, that William Chrystie (Frances Few Chrystie's son) had "spent three days with us on his way to claim his betrothed."[48] She had also heard – possibly from William Chrystie or in a letter from one of the Few sisters – what to her was the shocking news that "My friend Miss [Mary] Few has had an operation perform[ed] on her eyes for Cataracts, & I fear from all I hear it has not been successful. . . . It makes me very sad," she continued, "when I think of the possibility of her being deprived of that most precious gift sight but her mind is in such a heavenly frame that she will bear it better than those who look only to this world as their portion."[49] Early in 1860, Mary Telfair was still receiving letters from "my friend Mrs. Tillotson."[50]

Clearly, Mary Telfair remained in touch with the Few sisters through the increasingly bitter political upheavals of the 1850s, and it would be no great surprise had she met them on what would prove to be her final pre-war visit to the North in the summer of 1860.[51] Once war broke out the following year, it would have proved difficult, though not entirely impossible, for Mary Telfair and Mary Few to keep in touch with one another, at least on a regular basis. But given Mary Telfair's unambiguous political allegiance by 1861 and throughout the course of the war, it remains a moot point as to whether she felt she had anything at all left in common with – had anything at all left to say to – her closest northern woman friend, Mary Few.

Like so many of her contemporaries of both sexes in her elite Savannian circle of friends, from her childhood through to the political explosion of 1860, Mary Telfair had been both a staunch advocate and a practitioner of a nationalism that, since the Revolutionary era, had found it ideologically possible and politically expedient to incorporate the institution of slavery. Moreover, she was by no means alone among elite southerners in finding much to admire in the North, where she had been educated and where she had forged so many close friendships. From an early age she applauded northern energy and enterprise and lavished praise on technological innovations – particularly on the different uses to which steam power was being put. Unless and until it threatened her Georgia, Mary Telfair was no opponent of modernity. Indeed, in one of her best known pieces of original

writing, a poem written in 1841 or 1842, she celebrated not the cotton gin but "The Omnibus."[52]

Until 1861, when it was no longer possible for her to do so, Mary Telfair firmly believed that she lived in a nation in which sectional boundaries were merely irksome, ought to be irrelevant, and in many ways *were* irrelevant, that she inhabited a republic in which Savannah and New York City happily coexisted in perfect and total harmony, and that they could and ought to continue to do so *ad infinitum*. This was a belief – increasingly an illusion – that she, like so many other elite Savannians, clung to as long as possible, until the secession crisis in Georgia finally forced her hand. During the rapidly escalating political crisis of the late 1850s, the hitherto outward-looking Savannah elite circle, including Mary Telfair, found itself becoming increasingly beleaguered and, within the space of just a few months, turned back in on itself, retreated into its Lowcountry shell.

To begin with most reluctantly, and still hopeful of a reconciliation being achieved between the warring sections, Mary Telfair made what for her was the immensely painful decision to totally reject the North she had so long admired and in which she had so long felt herself to be completely at home, and to attach herself unreservedly to the Confederate cause. As the war took ever-deeper hold, her support for that increasingly doomed cause became increasingly shrill and uncompromising. The woman who in 1836 had declared to Mary Few that such was the high esteem in which she held "Yankee enterprise" that she "almost wish[ed] I was a Yankee,"[53] now spat out the word "Yankee" with as much contempt and hatred as she was able to muster. As she explained to Sarah Terrell, she felt "as if I could never unite with the North again."[54] Unfortunately, what she thought about Mary Few and her other northern women friends when she was venting her wartime bile on the "Yankees" to her southern friends remains open to question. Precisely the same is true of Mary Few's feelings toward her, especially perhaps late in 1864 when Sherman's army was fast approaching Savannah.

What we do know, though, is that the events of the war – the death in battle of so many of the elite southern men whom Mary Telfair had known since their childhood, and the attempted dismantling of her Lowcountry world by the "Yankees" whom she now professed to despise – did not cause a permanent breach in a friendship that by 1865 was fast approaching its

seventieth anniversary. Who initiated the renewal of friendship, and precisely when they did so, is uncertain, but by 1868, following a postwar trip to France, Mary Telfair was once more in touch with the Few sisters, and once again she was embarking on visits to the northern states.[55]

Mary Telfair and Mary Few may not have forgotten the deep divisions and bloodletting of the war, but clearly they had resolved to put the more unpleasant parts of the recent past behind them. Mary Telfair's very willingness to travel to the North, as well as her subsequent bequests to some of her oldest northern women friends, are indicative of her desire for reconciliation and for full acceptance back into the circle of friendship that had been so very important to her since her early teens.[56]

There is no record of exactly when and where Mary Telfair and Mary Few met for what both women must have sensed would almost certainly be the last time, of what they talked about, of what they wished to recall, and perhaps of what they both wanted to forget about their enduring friendship. Mary Few died in 1873, but it was not until the summer of the following year that Mary Telfair traveled north from Savannah on what she must have known would be her final trip to New York, to what had always been her second home. If only because of her enduring affection for Mary Few and her surviving sisters, Frances and Matilda, this was a journey that Mary Telfair was determined to make, despite her old age and failing health.

Unfortunately we do not have details of Mary Telfair's daily itinerary during her 1874 stay in New York. But it would be surprising – inconceivable even – if her stay did not include at least one pilgrimage to the churchyard of Trinity Church in lower Manhattan to say her final words of farewell to Mary Few, her "Siamese Twin," who had been interred there a few months earlier.[57] She then returned to Savannah to die alone in 1875.

Notes

1. There is no full-length biography of Edward Telfair. For a short study see E. Merton Coulter, "Edward Telfair," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 20 (June 1936): 88–124.

2. As well as their family home in Savannah, the Telfairs owned plantations and other properties in several Georgia counties, including Chatham, Richmond, Burke, and Jefferson, as well as an estate in the Barnwell District of South Carolina. Cotton was far and away the most lucrative crop produced on the Telfairs' plantations, and by the early nineteenth

century it was the principal source of the family's wealth. Before their premature deaths, Joseph and Thomas Telfair lived mainly on their plantations rather than in Savannah. Mary, Sarah, Margaret, and Alexander Telfair, on the other hand, preferred urban life to that in the Georgia countryside. Although they periodically visited their plantations, they relied on white overseers to manage them on a day-to-day basis. For ten years following Alexander's death in 1832, Mary and her sisters assumed the main responsibility for all aspects of the family's financial affairs. In 1842 the sisters were happy to hand over much of the responsibility to Margaret Telfair's new husband, William Brown Hodgson. For a more detailed discussion see Charles J. Johnson Jr., *Mary Telfair: The Life and Legacy of a Nineteenth-Century Woman* (Savannah, Ga., 2002), especially chapters 4 and 9.

3. Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Chicago, 1970); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York, 1982); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1988). Deborah Gray White's *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Old South* (New York, 1985) played a decisive role in drawing attention to the experiences and perceptions of enslaved women.

4. During the early 1990s Michael O'Brien was foremost among those who spearheaded this new interest in single women. His edited study *An Evening When Alone: Four Journals of Single Women in the South, 1827–1867* (Charlottesville, Va., 1993) testifies to the wealth of documentation left by many of these women. Christine Jacobson Carter detailed Mary Telfair's activities as a "maiden aunt" in her "Indispensable Spinsters: Maiden Aunts in the Elite Families of Savannah and Charleston," in Janet L. Coryell, Thomas H. Appleton Jr., Anastasia Sims, and Sandra Gioia Treadway, eds., *Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing with the Powers That Be* (Columbia, Mo., 2000), 110–34. Carter provides a more comprehensive analysis of single women (including Mary Telfair) in her path-breaking study *Southern Single Blessedness: Unmarried Women in the Urban South, 1800–1865* (Urbana and Chicago, Ill., 2006). Widows comprise another category of southern women who are only now beginning to receive detailed scholarly attention. For the first full-length study of those who inherited slaves, see Kirsten E. Wood, *Masterful Women: Slaveholding Widows from the American Revolution through the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2005).

5. There is no full-length biography of William Few. This account is drawn from Charles C. Jones Jr., "William Few, Lieutenant-Colonel Georgia Militia in the Revolutionary Service," [with an] "Autobiography of Colonel William Few of Georgia," *Magazine of American History* (1881): 340–58; Josephine Mellichamp, "William Few Jr.," in *Senators from Georgia* (Huntsville, Ala., 1976), 15–22; and John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography*, 24 vols. (New York, 1999), 7:869–70.

6. The other was Abraham Baldwin.

7. James Nicholson and his wife, Frances nee Witter, had several children. In 1793 their daughter Hannah married Albert Gallatin (as his second wife) and another of their daughters, Maria, married the Maryland lawyer and politician John Montgomery. One of their sons, James Witter Nicholson, became the manager of a glass works that had been established by Albert Gallatin in Fayette County, Pennsylvania. Following James Nicholson's death in 1804, William Few took over the management of his widowed mother-in-law's financial affairs.

8. In 1822 Frances Few (d. 1885) married Albert Chrystie, and they had two children, William Few Chrystie (1823–1902) and Mary Few Chrystie (1824–1842). Frances Few Chrystie is best known for the diary she kept during a visit to Washington, D.C., which includes an account of her meeting with Thomas Jefferson. Noble E. Cunningham Jr., "The Diary of Frances Few, 1808–1809," *Journal of Southern History* 29 (1963): 345–61. In 1834 Matilda Few (d.?) married a widower named John Tillotson.

9. William Few expressed his staunch opposition to slavery and the slave trade, and his desire to distance himself from Georgia, and all that he thought it stood for, in a letter that he wrote to Edward Telfair in 1804. In this piece, which was penned a few months after South Carolina had reopened the transatlantic slave trade, he argued that "every consideration of justice, humanity and safety, forbids that any more Negroes should be brought into *your* state." [Emphasis added.] Gilder Lehrman Document Collection, Document GLC 4842.05, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/documents/searchdisplay.cfm?ID=359.

10. The Fews divided their time between Fishkill-on-Hudson (now Beacon), New York, and New York City. In 1804 Few purchased 221 Broadway from Aaron Burr, and later he and his family moved to 10 Park Place.

11. Between 1802 and 1805 Few served in the New York Legislature, between 1802 and 1810 as Inspector of Prisons, and in 1813 and 1814 as a New York City alderman. In 1804 he made a fleeting reappearance on the national political stage when he was appointed as the United States' commissioner of loans, a post he almost certainly secured thanks to the patronage of his wife's uncle, Albert Gallatin. Financially, Few made a handsome living from various business interests. For example, between 1804 and 1814 he was a director of the Manhattan Bank, and he later served as the president of City Bank. Few died in 1824 at the Fishkill home of his daughter Frances and her husband, Albert Chrystie, and was buried in the local churchyard. In 1976, ironically, given his unwavering opposition to slavery and determination never to return to Georgia, Few's remains were taken to Augusta, Georgia, where they were reinterred – not in a Methodist cemetery but in the graveyard of St. Paul's Episcopal church. His widow Catherine survived until 1854.

12. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 18–26.

13. It is unclear precisely how long Mary Telfair spent in New York. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 19–22, 35–36.

14. Mary Telfair went to Philadelphia principally to visit her cousins Eliza, Mary, and Margaret. They were the daughters of her uncle, William Telfair, and his wife, Elizabeth Bellinger (Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 412). Social convention dictated that a woman of Mary Telfair's standing not travel unaccompanied by a chaperone. She adhered to this convention and, following Alexander's death, often traveled in the company of her kinsman George Jones and his family or with her close friends the Clays.

15. Many of Mary Few's letters to close friends such as Mary Rutherford Garretson can be found in the William Few Collection at the Georgia Department of Archives and History.

16. It was a common practice to save letters throughout the nineteenth century. If the parties had a falling out, it was customary to return the letters to their writer.

17. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 368.

18. The letters are to be found in the William Few Collection.

19. For the phrase "Siamese Twin" see Letters 97 and 98, dated Savannah, Georgia, 26 January 1840 and Savannah, Georgia, 5 April 1840.

20. For a contemporary account of Chang and Eng see *A few particulars concerning Chang-Eng, the united Siamese brothers, published under their own direction* (New York, ca. 1836).

21. Studies that have been particularly influential include Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1 (1975): 1–30, and Carol Lasser, " 'Let Us Be Sisters Forever': The Sororal Model of Nineteenth-Century Female Friendships," ibid., 14 (1988): 158–81. For recent scholarship on the nineteenth-century South see Anya Jabour, " 'It Will Never Do for Me to Be Married': The Life of Laura Wirt Randall, 1803–1833," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17 (1997): 193–236, and Elizabeth W. Knowlton, " 'Only a Woman Like Yourself' – Rebecca Alice Baldy: Dutiful Daughter, Stalwart Sister, and Lesbian Lover of Nineteenth-Century Georgia," in John Howard, ed., *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South* (New York, 1997).

22. Several scholars, most recently Christine Jacobson Carter in her *Southern Single Blessedness,* have identified an essentially similar pattern in their studies of other women's friendships and correspondence in the antebellum United States.

23. Sarah Gibbons Telfair died in 1827; Alexander Telfair in 1832; Sarah Telfair Haig in 1845; and Margaret Telfair Hodgson in 1874.

24. See Letter 2, dated Mill Haven, Georgia, 20 August 1811 and Letter 33, dated Savannah, Georgia, 25 January 1828. In 1778, after a ten-year friendship, Lady Eleanor Butler

eloped with Sarah Ponsonby. Eventually the two women set up home together in Llangollen, North Wales. Their relationship, which lasted for over fifty years, earned them fame and notoriety in equal measure. For a lengthier discussion see Elizabeth Mavor, *The Ladies of Llangollen* (London, new edition, 2002).

25. See Letter 9, dated Savannah, Georgia, 17 January 1815.

26. For discussions of this cosmopolitan world see Daniel Kilbride, "The Cosmopolitan South: Privileged Southerners, Philadelphia and the Fashionable Tour in the Antebellum Era," *Journal of Urban History* 26 (2000): 563–90; idem, "Travel, Ritual, and National Identity: Planters on the European Tour, 1820–1860," *Journal of Southern History* 69 (2003): 549–84; and Maurie D. McGinnis and Angela D. Mack, *In Pursuit of Refinement: Charlestonians Abroad, 1740–1860* (Columbia, S.C., 1999).

27. Modern readers cannot judge her opinion about her appearance: only two portraits of Mary Telfair exist, and no portrait of Mary Few has been located.

28. For a recent and brilliant analysis of this point see Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810–1860*, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004), 1:253–84. For earlier studies see Steven M. Stowe, "City, Country and the Feminine Voice," in Michael O'Brien and David Moltke-Hanson, eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston* (Knoxville, 1986), 295–325, and William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, "Traditional Belles or Borderline Bluestockings? The Petigru Women," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 4 (2001): 292–309.

29. Dictionaries were not commonly used in the early-nineteenth-century United States, and there was probably only Webster's *Compendious Dictionary* (1806) available to Mary Telfair. She most often uses British spelling, which suggests that she was not influenced by the spelling reforms advocated in Webster's 1828 *Dictionary*.

30. The dates of Mary's siblings are as follows: Josiah, 1784–1817; Thomas, 1786–1818; Alexander, 1789–1832; Sarah, 1792–1845; and Margaret, 1797–1874. Two of the Telfairs' three other children, a boy and a girl, died in their infancy, and another son died in his teens. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 411.

31. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 46–50.

32. William Brown Hodgson (1801–1871), a distinguished student of Middle-Eastern and Oriental languages, had served as the American consul general in Tunis. Following their marriage, William and Margaret based themselves in the Telfair family home in Savannah. Hodgson persisted in his linguistic studies, and several of the papers he read to the Georgia Historical Society were subsequently published. Hodgson also served on the Society's Board of Curators for more than twenty years. Following his death in 1871, Margaret Telfair Hodgson provided the initial funding for the building of Hodgson Hall, the new

headquarters of the Georgia Historical Society. After Margaret's death three years later, Mary Telfair provided the funding that enabled the building to be completed. For studies of Hodgson see Leonard L. Mackell, "William Brown Hodgson," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 15 (1831): 324–45; Thomas A. Bryson, *An American Consular Officer in the Middle East in the Jacksonian Era: A Biography of William Brown Hodgson* (Atlanta, 1979); and Kenneth Coleman and Charles Stephen Gurr, eds., *Dictionary of Georgia Biography*, 2 vols. (Athens, Ga., 1983), 1:464–65.

33. See Letter 52, dated Winchester, Virginia, 25 September 1832, and Letter 53, dated Savannah, Georgia, 4 January 1833.

34. For death in childbirth see Letter 68, dated Newport, Rhode Island, 1 August 1834; for death while undergoing surgery see Letter 67, dated Newport, Rhode Island, 7 July 1834; and for the *Pulaski* disaster see Letter 89, dated Savannah, Georgia, 20 June 1838.

35. The Reverend William Jay was the father of William Jay, the architect who was hired by Alexander Telfair to design the family mansion in Savannah. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 52–55.

36. In the event, Mary Telfair determined to have Alberta educated in Georgia, at the Montpellier Academy, rather than in England or the northern states. Here she was following what by the late 1830s was becoming a fairly common practice among elite southern families, sending their daughters to southern schools. For changing patterns of elite female education in the South between the late-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century, see Catherine Clinton, " 'Equally Their Due': The Education of the Planter Daughter in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 2 (1982): 39–60; Steven M. Stowe, " 'The Not-So-Cloistered Academy': Elite Women's Education and Family Feeling in the Old South," in Walter J. Fraser Jr., E. Frank Saunders Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education* (Athens, Ga., 1985), 90–106; and Christie Anne Farnham, *The Education of a Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socializing in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1994).

37. See Letter 8, dated Savannah, Georgia, 26 November 1814.

38. Carter, "Indispensable Spinsters," passim, and idem, *Southern Single Blessedness*, 64–94.

39. For an exception see Letter 142, dated Savannah, Georgia, 29 [?] [? 1843–1844], in which Mary Telfair mentions Theodore Frelinghuysen's possible candidacy for the office of vice-president of the United States.

40. For the account of her visit to the U.S. Senate see Letter 106, dated Washington, D.C., 2 July 1841.

41. Letter 91, dated Savannah, Georgia, 24 December 1838.

42. Letter 36, dated Savannah, Georgia, 9 June 1828.

43. Letter 93, dated Savannah, Georgia, 19 June 1839.

44. Letter 141, n.p., n.d. [1841 or 1842].

45. Letter 112, dated Savannah, Georgia, 12 December [1842].

46. See Letter 118. Internal evidence, however, strongly suggests that Letter 119 may have been written three months later, on 4 July 1844.

47. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 335.

48. Mary Telfair to Lucy Terrell, Savannah, 13 January 1855, William and Eliza Rhodes Terrell Papers, Special Collections Library, Duke University. William Chrystie married Elizabeth Thomas.

49. Mary Telfair to Sarah or Lucy Terrell, n.p., n.d., William and Eliza Rhodes Terrell Papers. Mary Few had suffered difficulties with her eyesight for many years. See Letter 15, dated Savannah, Georgia, 24 May 1818.

50. Mary Telfair to Sarah Terrell, St. James's Square, 5 February 1860, William and Eliza Rhodes Terrell Papers. "Mrs. Tillotson" was Mary Few's sister Matilda.

51. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 329–30.

52. See Letter 141, n.p., n.d. [1841 or 1842].

53. Letter 76, dated Gardiner, Maine, 14 August 1836.

54. Mary Telfair to Sarah Terrell, n.p., 23 November 186[?], William and Eliza Rhodes Terrell Papers.

55. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 358–59. Although Mary Telfair lost the capital value of the enslaved people she had owned prior to the Civil War, her other investments, particularly in real estate and railroads both northern and southern, retained their value and meant that her economic status was not affected as it might have been by the ending of slavery. For her investments at the time of her death, see Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 393–98.

56. For Mary Telfair's bequests, see Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 401.

57. Mary Few was laid to rest in the same vault as her younger brother Albert and her mother. The vault also contains the remains of her sisters, Albert Gallatin, Mary Lucille Gallatin, James Gallatin (her cousin), and Mary Montgomery (her aunt).

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EDITORIAL NOTE ON THE TEXTS

The William Few Collection, which is found in the Georgia Department of Archives and History (Manuscripts Section), contains 292 letters known to have been written by Mary Telfair to Mary Few between 1802 and 1844.[1] Unfortunately, only ninety-six of them are fully dated. Most of the remainder include the month and day but not the year of their composition. Internal evidence permits more precise dating of some of these letters. The available evidence suggests that this was a remarkably regular correspondence, with Mary Telfair's letters being quite evenly distributed both between decades and within individual years. The letters chosen for selection in this volume reflect as accurately as possible this chronological distribution.

No attempt has been made to correct Mary Telfair's often-inconsistent spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and syntax, except that superscript ordinal suffixes have been set on the line. The sources of her quotations are noted only at first occurrence.

Note

1. The remainder of the collection consists of letters written by Mary Few and her sisters Frances and Matilda to members of the Garretson family. The collection also includes the diary kept by Frances Few when she visited Washington, D.C., in the early nineteenth century; Matilda Few's composition book; some papers relating to John Chrystie's service in the War of 1812; and a draft of William Few's memoirs. For a full inventory of the collection see the guide and location list prepared by the Georgia Department of Archives and History (Manuscripts Section).

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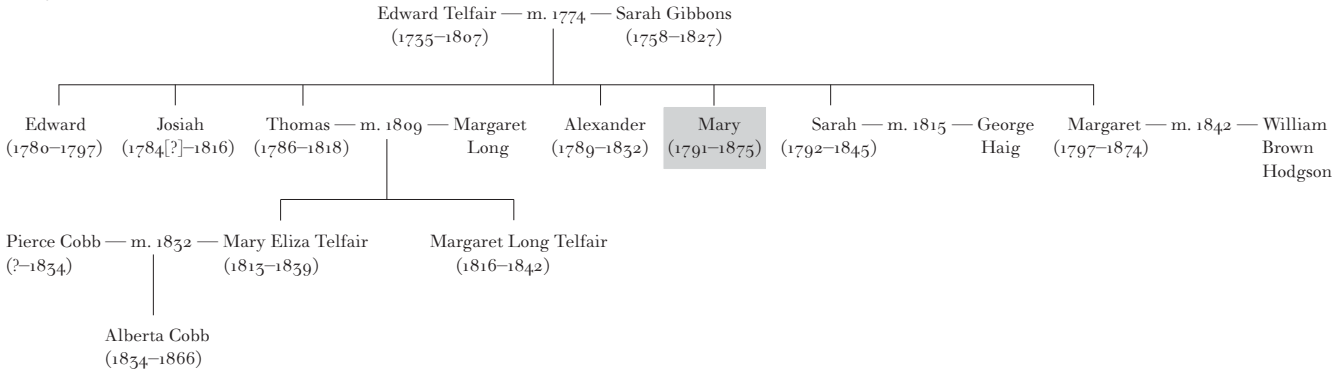
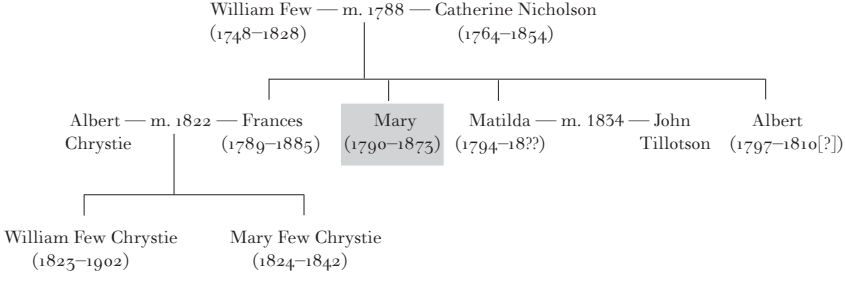
THE TELFAIR AND FEW FAMILIES

Telfair


Edward Telfair — m. 1774 — Sarah Gibbons
(1735–1807) (1758–1827)
Edward (1780–1797)
Josiah (1784[?]–1816)
Thomas — m. 1809 — Margaret Long (1786–1818)
Alexander (1789–1832)
Mary (1791–1875)
Sarah — m. 1815 — George Haig (1792–1845)
Margaret — m. 1842 — William Brown Hodgson (1797–1874)
Pierce Cobb — m. 1832 — Mary Eliza Telfair (?–1834) (1813–1839)
Margaret Long Telfair (1816–1842)
Alberta Cobb (1834–1866)

Few


William Few — m. 1788 — Catherine Nicholson
(1748–1828) (1764–1854)
Albert — m. 1822 — Frances Chrystie (1789–1885)
Mary (1790–1873)
Matilda — m. 1834 — John Tillotson (1794–18??)
Albert (1797–1810[?])
William Few Chrystie (1823–1902)
Mary Few Chrystie (1824–1842)

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Dated Letters

1 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 11 NOVEMBER 1802

I received your letter by Mrs. Houston, dated October 28th & am much obliged to you for your attention in writing me. I hope you will favor me with a letter often. We had a pleasant passage of ten days. I was much disappointed not seeing Papa he arrived the day after us. He was in bad health but has recovered very fast. I am very sorry to hear that your Mama is not well. Mama intends sending you another Barrel of sweet Potatoes by the Brig Ceries. I enclose a small letter for Matilda. Mama & Papa desires to be remembered to your Mama & Papa. I remain your sincere friend.

2 MILL HAVEN, GEORGIA, 20 AUGUST 1811

I never my dear Mary, sacrifice much to ceremony (particularly with my friends) which you will easily perceive by this letter; for I verily believe that our correspondence would have ceased if some little exertion had not been made on my part to continue it; for writing to you and Frances has from long habit become so natural and from the affection I bear you both, so pleasing a task that I feel as if I could never resign it.[1]

Mama received a letter from my dear Mrs. Few yesterday and will answer it soon, tell your Mama it would afford me inexpressible pleasure to accept her kind invitation of spending this winter with my friends at Greenwich,[2] which is endeared to me by the remembrance of the many happy days spent there, in the happiest period of my life; they were indeed halcyon days, and to revisit those delightful scenes where every spot of ground would recall forcibly to my mind some childish sport in which you always partook, but these pleasures have long since past and now only to be reenjoyed in memory where they appear fresh as the incidents of yesterday.

I most sincerely wish you would pay me a visit. You once told me that you felt a desire to see Georgia. Why cannot you execute it? I wrote to Frances to entreat her to come out with Mrs. McAllister[3] and spend the winter with us if she cannot you must. I think I have more hopes from you knowing your fondness for travelling, and the opportunity is so good & I would take such good care of you after getting you once in my possession that I think you would be reconciled to spend a few months from home. I really wish you would think seriously of the affair and decide in my favor for by so doing you would bestow infinite happiness on your friend. I have the vanity to suppose, that I should not find it a very difficult matter to obtain your consent. but the consent of your Papa & Mama is what I most despair of — do try and persuade them; summon all your eloquence to aid you in the attempt, which I hope will not be vain — do write and let me know whether I may expect the felicity of a visit from you or Fran — as I know not which would make the most delightful sensation the sight of you or her. I cannot in case my petition fails with you & Frances apply as a dernier resource to Matilda for I know she is too great a pet to be spared — if only you knew how much happiness it would confer on us all you would try very hard to come.

Perhaps ere this you have left Rhinebeck and the amicable family of Garretson.[4] Your time must have been spent very pleasantly for at this season the North river must be delightful, never shall I forget my emotions on first beholding the mountains, there was something so grand (and to me) so noble in the appearance of them, that my eye was quite enchanted, and I thought I could never be tired of viewing the lovely scenery which surrounded me.[5] You who are accustomed daily to observe the beauties of Nature could not have been so much struck on sailing up that beautiful river. I was like a child in a toyshop. I wanted all the {*illegible*} I saw, hardly knowing which to give the preference to (in truth) would have been contented with one.

How long has Frances been in Maryland. Margaret apprized me of her intention of visiting Mrs. Montgomery who I have scarcely heard of since she entered into the {*illegible*} state of matrimony.[6] Has she been made happy yet. I never think of your objection to Mr. M. without smiling, it certainly was a very formidable one. Your aunt Maria was a great favorite of mine. I thought her one of the most interesting and accomplished women I ever met with, and to hear of her well always gives me pleasure. Adieu my

dear Mary. Present my regards to your Mama – love to Matilda and believe me to be your sincere friend. Mary.

1. This paragraph makes it clear that this is not the first letter written by Mary Telfair to Mary and Frances Few. Earlier ones may have been lost or remain to be discovered.

2. Greenwich Village, New York City, where the Fews had a house.

3. Louisa McAllister, the wife of Matthew H. McAllister. Both were close friends of Mary Telfair and her family.

4. Rhinebeck, New York. This was the family of the Reverend Freeborn Garretson (1752–1827), a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and his wife, Catharine nee Livingston (1752–1849). By the early 1790s his ministry was largely confined to New York City. Principally because of their shared Methodism, the Garretsons and Fews became close friends.

5. Here Mary Telfair is describing the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River.

6. Maria Nicholson (b. 1775), the fourth daughter of Commodore James Nicholson. She was the second wife of John Montgomery, a Maryland lawyer and by 1811 the attorney general of that state. During the 1820s Montgomery also served two terms (1820–1822, 1824–1826) as the mayor of Baltimore. John Montgomery died in 1828. The Nicholsons had two sons, John H. and James N. Montgomery.

3 WAYNESBORO, GEORGIA, 19 OCTOBER 1812

Do not dear Mary infer from the length of time I have taken to answer your charming long letter, that it was not acceptable for believe me the amusement derived from it was very great, several times have I perused it, but the consciousness of a want of subjects for a letter in this remote place has this long deterred me from writing, but now I am determined to make a *bold attempt* and should I not succeed your goodness will pardon me.

Here we are immersed in a wilderness far removed from the vortex of business and pleasure, where the "human face divine"[1] never appears, and the only pleasure we enjoy is looking and talking to each other, the life we lead is similar to a monastic one only that we have no Nuns or *Confessors*, and are permitted to range unmolested through the gloomy pine-trees whose dark green tops cheer the eye, and whose hollow murmurs enchant the ear, do you think Molly such a scene as this would please your fancy? Bad as it is I should like to have you here and make *"the unruly member"*[2] rather a little, however I cordially acknowledge that I never found it defi-

cient, great and loud talkers are my aversion, when in the society of a person of this description, I always sigh for taciturnity, and feel every inclination to silence them.

On the 23 of this month we commence our journey to Savannah after an absence of nearly four months. I always return to town with pleasure, and never leave it with regret, for even the most solitary abode where Hygeia dispenses her blessings, is preferable to remaining in a place, where the mind remains dormant from excessive heat, and the body liable to be affected by sickness. I am fond of the country where "Boon nature scatters, free and wild, Each plant or flower, the mountains child"[3] and should take great delight in cultivating a little spot. What can be more pleasing than to watch the progress of a favorite plant, the interest we take in it bears a slight similitude to that which a Mother takes in her infant. What felicity could have been so perfect so innocent as that of our first parents before they tasted the tree of knowledge. Yours and Frances gardens I hope will flourish beneath your fostering hands like a little Eden. I made a beautiful collection of vines and shrubbs last March, and put them into a wooden box for you and have since regretted that I did not send it by Mr. Campbell for I fear the frost will nip their buds before my return.

"Old maids alley," "country corner," and the "Temple of Hymen" tell Fran I admire her wit, and should like to know which of the three is her shrine. I suspect she means to slip into the latter with some dear creature. I hope she will give me timely notice and take me by surprise because the *shock* will be almost too much for my nerves. You and I will step *boldly* into the former and stand "the worlds dread laugh"[4] but Mary what report is this you alluded to for I am all curiosity to know who you have been *flirting* with. Oh! you are a sly Girl and betrayed yourself without intending it, however I will not believe it as you say there is no truth in it.

I agree with you my dear Mary in admiring Walter Scott, the wildness and enthusiasm of his verse is so delightful, and then he possesses so much *amor patria*, how beautiful his address to Caledonia is, in "the last lay of the Minstrel"[5] but the Lady of the Lake is my favorite of all his productions, the characters are so inimitably drawn, that of Roderick in particular, his virtue 'tho savage were very noble, and comes up exactly to my idea of the ancient highland character, and Douglass though more polished and cast in a gentler mould, was equal in bravery and still more to be admired. What a captivating fellow is Fitz James so much of the elegant man of fashion

combined with a mind full of chivalrous deeds, of romantic ideas, a heart replete with sensitivity Ellen *woman like*, notwithstanding her prediliction for Malcolm could not see him unmoved and refrain from bestowing a parting glance a little of the coquette in that. But if I sometime indulge in my admiration for these fictitious characters I shall forget that there are real ones in existence.

I have read nothing, this summer my mind has been wholly engrossed with needle work and inventing little trifles by way of amusement. The newspapers at this interesting period are to me more acceptable than the most beautiful poems, for I seize them with avidity, and my heart throbs with joy whenever I discover a successful action of the Americans, for instance the victory of Capt. Hull & Porter, the gallant conduct of Capt. Crane contrast it with the inglorious surrender in Canada which has cast such a stigma on the American character which nothing but a conquest of that country can retrieve and how many valuable lives will that cost![6]

The southern states are in a defenceless situation, and should government authorize the conquest of Florida our troops will be sent there; the Spaniards and Indians together have committed some depredations already, several American soldiers & citizens have been inhumanly scalped, the *sable* tribe flock to the Spanish standard and foolishly imagine that their freedom will be the result, little imagining that their bondage will be more rigid.

I suspect all women are politicians now. Alexander accuses me of sporting federal sentiments because I abuse the administration, indeed a want of energy is very perceptible and *I only wish I was a man* possessing talents either for the cabinet or the field. I think I should be very active do not smile Molly, for there is no danger of *petticoat* innovations.

Are you not tired of my nonsense I am of writing it so will bid you farewell not without a charge to write frequently. Do not let *the times* prevent you for land conveyances will not I hope be stopped by the enemy. Remember us to the whole of your family and believe me unalterably yours. MT

1. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 3.44

2. The likeliest source of this quotation is James, 3:8.

3. The exact quotation, "Boon Nature scatter'd," comes from Walter Scott, *The Lady of the Lake* (Edinburgh, 1810).

4. James Thomson, *The Seasons* (London, 1730), "Autumn," line 223.

5. First published in Edinburgh and London in 1805.

6. This is a reference to the surrender of Fort Detroit and the territory of Michigan to the British by William Hull (1753–1825) in August 1812. Isaac Hull (1773–1843) was the captain of the *Constitution*; David Porter (1780–1843) was the captain of the *Essex*, which captured nine vessels, including the *Alert*, the first ship taken from the British in the War of 1812; and William Crane (1776–1846) was captain of the brig *Nautilus*.

4 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 12 JUNE [1813][1]

You cannot but acknowledge my dear Mary that I set you an admirable example in one respect – that is answering your letters immediately after receiving them, do whenever you feel in a *chatty* mood give vent to your *immoderate* love for talking by selecting me as your companion, even should you always indulge in one to me my favorite topic, for "Lovely are the tales of other times"[2] and to revert to them always produces a sad but pleasing melancholy – I perfectly agree with you Mary in thinking Childhood the happiest period in life, our feelings then are not governed by the rigid maxims of prudence, unsuspicious & thoughtless with few ideas beyond the present moment we are attracted by every species of novelty place implicit faith in the profession of everyone and cannot be induced to think so much deceit & corruption prevails in the world as is represented to us, Miss Owenson describes this happy season in the following beautiful sentence – "there is a dear and precious period in the life of man, which brief as sweet is best appreciated in recollection. When but to exist is to enjoy, when the rapid pulse throbs wildly with the vague delight which fills the careless heart and when it may be truly said that nothing is but what is not."[3]

At Greenwich some of the happiest moments of my existence were spent one scene in particular is impressed on my mind and which is truly laughable but at the time we committed the theft terror & remorse seized me your Papa had cultivated a little peach tree with uncommon care the fruit of which was forbidden every time we passed beneath it, like Mother Eve sighed to taste of it, from the size and beauty of one I was tempted to pluck it but behold a limb comes with it and the tree boasted of but one other In a sad dillemma we both stood petrified with astonishment you with the true spirit of a Quack got a rag and bound the dislocated limb saying it would

appear as if the tree was innoculated but I was of a different opinion and was for dragging it off; *York* was called on for advice, and he was on my side so the limb was carried off & thrown where no eye could penetrate – this was nothing Molly to some of our *pranks* which time can never obliterate from my remembrance.

I wrote to Frances by Mrs. Bartow who has determined on not going to the north this summer for she expects to be confined the last of this month and I think it very probable the Vessel will be taken, she has consigned my letter & things to Mrs. Thomas Glen who will have them conveyed to Greenwich provided she arrives in safety danger is very much apprehended, for they go in a small Sloop built to sail up and down the north river carrys nothing but ballast in hopes that the enemy will deem them freight (which consists of Lady's and children) too worthless to seize but I would not trust to their politeness or Mercy for they have evinced so little on land that I doubt whether much will be extended on the ocean. Should they encounter a Frigate commanded by a Hardy or Beresford they might hope to meet with kindness and attention but from a Privateer nothing but robbery and ill treatment might be expected. Last summer I took a walk under the avenues of trees which stands along the Bay Cynthia poured forth her silvery light, it reminded me of Robertson Street[4] how often did its pavements re-echo to our footsteps Sarah wishes to know whether Frances recollects the eventful night of blunders and to whom they were made I long as much as you do for a sociable tete a tete without the aid of pen, ink and paper, I am sure I should exhaust myself with anecdotes such as were wont to set the Garret in a roar, but I know not when we shall meet but I live in hopes of seeing you. What we wish we are apt to think easily accomplished, but I hope absence will be beguiled by a correspondence more punctual on *your* part than it hitherto has been. – I almost wish you were in Washington instead of New York that my Brother Thomas might see and be able to give me a more particular account of you than I can collect from others.

I find you are a political Enthusiast and a great admirer of Heros as your humble Servant I feel as if I could idolize Harrison and venerate the memory of Pike.[5] I observed in the papers that he has left a wife and only child but what must be the feelings of the Sister of the youth you mentioned his aid, who fell at the same time I can easily imagine them.

As it is highly probable that Frances will not receive the letter I wrote

for a length of time and be in a state of uncertainty as regards the Watch – I will again mention through the medium of this letter what I wish – As one of the description I mentioned cannot be procured tell her to get one that suits her taste ornamented with pearl wrought gold and enamel the chief thing is keeping good time a small seal and key to suit it a hood or ring to confine it to the waist and instead of a nut to confine the chain a hoop ring set round with pearl to fit her third finger. I have enclosed in this a bill & will thank her to get a pair of fine wrought gold ear rings with drops of the newest pattern and they can be cent with the watch if a private conveyance does not offer to the City of Washington before the adjournment of Congress I have no doubt there will be many persons returning by land in the fall – accept love from all likewise present it and believe me to be yours Mary T

1. The date of this letter is indicated by the reference to the death of General Zebulon Pike on 27 April 1813.

2. This phrase appears to be a variation on "Lovely are the words of other times" from James Macpherson's *Ossian* poetry, first published in 1767.

3. The Irish-born author Sydney Owenson (ca. 1775–1859), later Lady Morgan. For more details on her life and work see Mary Campbell, *The Life and Times of Sydney Owenson* (London, 1988).

4. Mary Few's home was located on Robertson Street, New York City.

5. William Henry Harrison (1773–1841) was a military leader and politician and became the ninth president of the United States in 1841. He first gained national fame as a war hero, defeating Native Americans at the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811, thereby earning the nickname "Tippecanoe" (or "Old Tippecanoe"). His most significant contribution during the War of 1812 was the victory at the Battle of the Thames.

General Zebulon Montgomery Pike (1779–1813), a soldier and explorer, was killed in an explosion shortly after leading a successful American attack on York, Ontario (now Toronto), in April 1813.

5 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 4 AUGUST [1813][1]

Your last letter dear Mary possessed *if possible* in a higher degree, the power of charming than several preceding ones how I *envied* you that charming ride on the banks of the Hudson where Natures sports in all the varieties of wild and cultivated beauty, oh! never shall I forget the feelings

inspired by a first contemplation of that noble river and while sailing on its graceful stream, lost in wonder and delight at the awful and sublime works of nature, have I wished to dwell in some little Cottage in the wildest part of the Highlands, I would then joyfully have resigned my native state and *all* my friends here for *two* in New York with no other society I thought I could be happy, but as we become older our habits become more fixed, our feelings move under the guidance of reason, and now it would be a more difficult task to tear myself from Georgia for I find ties cling around my heart that nothing could sever, still I give your Country the preference in almost every respect, and think *its soil* more conducive to the growth of the *Virtues* as well as the graces than ours. Sublime scenery certainly expands the soul and makes it soar above the vulgar joys of earth, and that is one reason I believe why more virtue is to be met with in the Country than in Cities, the luxury too and dissipation which prevail in the latter, is too apt to crush every thing like elevation of sentiment, and the accomplished veterans in vice consider it as an old fashioned thing only fit to excite ridicule.

When I contrast the beauties of your ride with our barren wastes it makes me gloomy, indeed *Molly* I envy you the pleasure of riding through such *Arcadian* scenes and I *almost* envy you the happy tales of scenic description, were you inclined to your sex's failing vanity, I would not tell you this but as you underrate your excellencies I think there is no danger of *poisoning* your mind, I have a moral aversion to compliments but truth I cannot conceal, so Mary in plain terms I must tell you that I showed it to a man of sense (forgive the deed) and he would scarcely believe that Woman *poor weak Woman* could feel, and write so well, declared it was written in a *masterly* style and I was as much pleased at the enconomium bestowed upon you as if I had been the writer.

Among my numerous *female* acquaintances I find none who enter into the feelings which at present occupy my breast, I know not whether it is the case at the north but the southern Ladies are so much engrossed by *domestic concerns* that they seldom think and talk of their Country and except with my Brother I can never give scope to "the unruly member" and exercise it on *politics*, however yours & Frances's letters are a never failing treat, and whenever I read them I wish we *were all three Men*, so that we might fight our countrys battles, say Molly how would you like to be a General and have your old friend for an aid, I would promise never

to *desert*, or let *you surrender to an inferior force*. But as a woman I am the veriest coward in existence and tremble at the sight of a wasp, how then could I have the cannons roar, and the savage yell, I believe I should have to serve my Country in the Cabinet instead of the field, notwithstanding my predilection for the latter.

You ask me how I felt when I heard the melancholy intelligence of the death of Lawrence, the loss of a relation or very dear friend alone could have afflicted me more; we naturally attach the idea of virtue with valor and when we meet with an individual so noble and disinterested as to forsake every domestic comfort with a determination of meeting Victory or Death, and when we consider that he fights for us, for our liberty, as well as public fame, the most enthusiastic admiration and lively gratitude is excited, I could not bear to read the pompous description of his funeral obsequescies, every American heart on the perusal of it must have glowed with a variety of emotions and the most prevalent one, his being interred on British land, however he richly meritted every mark of respect bestowed by his enemies for he had proved himself a generous Foe.

It is generally thought Savannah will be the next place to be attacked, every preparation is making for its defence, the Women receiving a dreadful lesson by the attack on Hampton are all removing into the country while their Fathers, Brothers & Husbands, are determined on weilding their swords in defence of their City should their fears be realised. I tremble with anxiety the arrival of every mail for a heavy cannonading was distinctly heard a few days ago from that quarter where Beaufort lies and it is quite a defenceless town; at this eventful crisis the mind is kept in perpetual agitation.

The interest you take in *the rise and progress* of my Brother induces me to send you a copy of Alexanders last oration, it does not read as well as it spoke a compliment by the {*? Assembly*} to the speaker, with all its imperfections you will at all events pronounce it to be a productive effusion.[2]

You I find have been disappointed as well as myself in not seeing a specimen of my Brother Thomas's eloquence in print, he wrote me word that he had delivered several speeches, one I understood was published in a *Federal* paper and as we do not deal in *such stuff* never saw it but I hope he will distinguish himself, his ambition is great if his pride does not interfere, it

is rare in this state for a politician to succeed without suing for popularity and that does not accord with his ideas, he is for being sought.

Josiah[3] combines the characters of Legislator, Planter and Soldier, he has a fine troop of Horse ready for action whenever the Governor chooses to accept his services as a Candidate for the Legislature, and resides chiefly on his Plantation. Sarah is not to be married, to my knowledge the Gentleman whom report has given to her is now in Canada and bows with due submission to the decrees of Bellona instead of Venus. Margaret is thought to *partake more of my nature* than Sarahs but I think we are different in our dispositions and notions of things although *in argument* we often agree, What would I not give to chat awhile with you and my beloved Fran who does not care *half* as much for me as I do for her for she seldom writes, you are *rather* better but still very remiss – do have compassion on a solitary mortal and cheer her by your charming letters more frequently for were you to march the world over you would not find one more devotedly attached to you than the absent Mary

1. The date is indicated by the reference to the activities of the Royal Navy in and around Chesapeake Bay during the War of 1812.

2. There is no indication that this speech was published.

3. Her brother.

6 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, [?] JULY [? 1814][1]

There is a peculiar charm in letters, particularly when they flow from the pen of those endeared to us by the recollections of early pleasures, a charm which can be better felt than described, for the former requires only a heart while the latter demands the glow of eloquence; whenever I take my pen in hand dear Mary to write to you I feel as if I could unfold a *Budget* and ere I conclude all appears cold & formal, but to hear from you always *warms* my heart and makes me wish that I could grasp the reality instead of the shadow and oh! What an irresistible desire do I then feel to *chat* with her who was my companion at Richmond Hill,[2] and afterwards my philosopher friend in the garret in Robertson Street, Mary I long to know whether you are as Taciturn as ever although I confess I never found you so *in private* particularly when *our* friend Mr. Wright was

the subject, even now the remembrance of his *courteous* manner and our *violent predilection* for him makes me smile, we were strange Beings then don't you think so? but I must really trumpet faith in *syren* sounds my own praise and tell you that I am vastly improved in one respect, I seldom now form strong prejudices in favor or against persons at first sight for I have been convinced from after observation of the impropriety of it can you make the same favorable report of yourself perhaps your *Modesty* will prevent it. I regret exceedingly that *Brother Tom* could not have a peep at your fair face and that you were disappointed in not meeting with him and *Cousin Alfred* who might have resumed his former sway but I fancy you need no such monitor now; I am not at all acquainted with his hero except from character but think if the old story was correct he must be a *man of taste*. He is to deliver an Oration on the 4 of July and as you are interested in his political fate I will inform you in my next how he acquits himself and should it be published will send you a copy.

How very delightful must have been your visit to the Eastern Shore, there Time must have flown on Eagle pinions for nothing can be more agreeable in the Country than a good Library and the society of a few select friends, but who is *Cousin Joes* I have a presentiment that he will prove to be Frances's Paragon that she described in a letter, is he not a charming married man with *curled locks*, if so *I am very well acquainted with him*. If you complain of the want of hills in Maryland I know not what you would think of Georgia for it is one universal plain and I assure you a little eminence captivates our eye as much as a lofty mountain would yours. I often wish that we could boast of a scenery as lovely as that which environs New York and a climate as healthy however I think I would be satisfied with one of those blessings. I expect we shall leave Savannah about 8th for the interior and when immersed in our Wilderness of Pines I shall often have you in my imagination as a companion.

You are such an *able Politician* (although a *Trimmer*) that I am almost deterred from expressing my opinion on the late wonderful revolution in Europe, scarcely can it be realized, any sympathy for Bonaparte is not half as great as it would have been had his reign been less brilliant but more virtuous but I cannot at all reconcile the idea of such a conqueror submitting so quietly to his fate and receiving a pension from the very family on whose ruin he rose, do not think me immoral when I say he ought to

have followed the example of Cato it is better to die gloriously than to live *meanly*. What an asylum does the Island of Elba afford to one long accustomed to the splendour of a court and the din of arms his mind must be as tortured in retirement as the Body of a victim extended on the rack. Is it not {*illegible*} and *unwomanlike* in the Empress deserting him in adversity {? *having*} reposed so much confidence in her and treated her so much as his equal (a thing by the way very rare with *great* men) and for that reason all the feelings of gratitude ought to have been called forth but I believe there exists but little affection among crowned heads they are the mere creatures of ambition or interest. I hope my dear Mary the olive will be extended to us but I very much fear Great Britain will be more unwilling than ever *now* to accede to our terms and should she remain inflexible what a long and dreadful war this will be the thought of it makes me shudder, still I cannot bear that our national honor should receive a stigma by yielding to her — Well Mary I think you must be almost tired of me but before I close I must say a word in favor of our *much loved* Lord Byron are you not enchanted with his last production it surpassed in my opinion all his preceding ones,[3] we are so led away by the sensibility which marks every line of his richly flowing verse that we forget that his Hero's are as imperfect as himself, but I must make another *desperate* effort to bid you good night for all is hushed around in deep repose except Sarah who occupies a seat near me and is plying the needle with the dexterity of a mantua maker and begging me to write for Morpheus has not begun to shower his poppies over her lids but he has nearly sealed mine so farewell or in the words of Hamlet "Adieu, Adieu, adieu, remember me."[4] — your affectionate Friend Mary

1. The date is indicated by the reference to Napoleon Bonaparte's exile on the island of Elba.

2. Richmond Hill, New York City, a childhood home of Mary Few.

3. Byron's "last production" was probably a reference to *The Corsair*, published in London in February 1814.

4. *Hamlet*, 1.5.

7 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 28 OCTOBER 1814

Feeble would be my attempts my dear Mary, to describe to you the delight your charming Epistle created in my breast; never do I feel so happy

as when canvassing an idea with the friend of my youth, oh how different from the *soul enlivening* intercourse enjoyed in the *third story* in Robertson Street, but still there is a magic charm in receiving letters from those we love, the feelings certainly are less constrained than in conversation and we pour forth our whole heart without knowing it.

I agree with that divine (though satyrical) Poet Pope in thinking that "Heaven first taught letters for some wretches aid, Some banished Lover or some captive Maid."[1] I have many correspondents, but such is my disposition that I can never receive their Epistles without being seized with a violent fit of the *blues* and to take a retrospect of the happy hours past in the society of my friends without indulging in all the luxury of grief. I am happy that you have proposed keeping a journal for me. I will do the same for you, though convinced that it will not be half as interesting as yours. Savannah does not produce a great variety however I will try my *prettiest* to afford you entertainment but my dear Mary it must be sacred from every eye but yours and Frans oh! the dear *soul* how I should like to hear some of her jokes and a few of her *brilliant* sentiments tell her the world has taught me the fallacy of some of mine. I begin to view things as I ought, and instead of being *charmed* with *tinsels* I await until a long acquaintance unfolds the merits of persons, for I have been too frequently deceived. I once had a friend that I adored. She married and forgot me, and all the protestations of friendship she so often made; if you knew the whole story you would think perhaps I displayed too much pride on the occasion, but I have never been accustomed to slights and can illy brook them.

The report of Sarah's[2] engagement is without foundation, her heart if analyzed would be discovered to be formed of more adamantine materials than mine, which you will know is perfectly impenetrable to the wiles of sly little Cupid. I think Molly you & I could *jog* through life without an *incumbrance*, which most women think absolutely essential to happiness. Are you *serious* when you excite the most pleasing hopes in me, will you really visit me in April? Language is inadequate to express the happiness it would create among us all. I shall expect you, so beware how you disappoint me.

Margaret[3] has improved very much, she appears to be perfectly amiable and very well informed for her age. She is very fond of you & talks incessantly of the whole family. Accept our grateful thanks for their attention extended to her by every individual that bears the name of Few.

Poor Miss Lewis! To have her fondest hopes crushed is dreadful indeed, and the dear *Youth* how does he support the loss of such a multitude of charms. Miss Laight still *gabbling* her tongue must be nearly worn out in the service, does she know that her once loved Noble[4] has two lovely children they are beautiful as angels. So Henry has gone to *graze*, he was an ugly fellow, but *Gabe* your swain has he too sought the shades – and Hunter is he still extant? a young Gentleman of my acquaintance a captain in the army saw him he enquired after his *Ballstown* friend.[5]

I am going to make a bold request – {*illegible*} get two mantles, exactly like Margarets for – {*illegible*} & myself, have them made to fit you and do get them as soon as possible & send by the first opportunity write at the same time, and I shall receive it safe. I am destitute of warm clothing and require something to shield me from the *wintry blast.* Do Mary write to me often, tell Frances I have not yet finished her extracts of verse & prose. The Lady of the Lake is certainly a sweet little Poem. I know it almost by heart. Ellen is a wonder, I wish she had married Fitz-James instead of Malcom. Adieu, I will write again very soon & a longer letter. Your friend Mary

1. Alexander Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard* (London, 1720), line 51.

2. Her sister Sarah.

3. Her sister Margaret.

4. Noble is almost certainly Noble Wimberley Jones II (1787–1818), a cousin to Mary Telfair. Jones was married to Sarah Campbell, and by this date they had two children, George Noble Jones (1811–1876) and Sarah Fenwick Jones (1814–1869). Their third child was Mary Gibbons Jones (1816–1875). Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 422.

5. Ballstown (now Ballston) Spa, New York.

8 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 26 NOVEMBER 1814

The lambent flame of *vanity* my dear Mary would be too strongly excited if you knew the *magic influence* your letters possess over me, they rouse me from a state of apathy and cause my *sombre fits* to vanish, and all the *little brilliants* to flutter around and support my spirits which for one *whole* day (after reading a letter from you) are passing great. Do not imagine from the length of time I have taken to answer your *patriotic* effusion that I did not value it sufficiently, for it perfectly accorded with the *republican* sentiments of your friend and if I could have summoned resolution

enough to address you amid deep solitudes and *awful* shades,[1] or if my infertile brain could have furnished aught that was interesting or amusing my pen long ago would have been wielded in your cause, but I felt dull and spiritless and I was aware that my feelings would have imparted a melancholy hue to my pages, and thus I deferred writing to my dear Mary until this period. You will I am sure pardon my dereliction from that punctuality which has hither to been observed on my part, in future I will be more *prompt* and I shall expect in return very frequently to be solaced by your entertaining letters, to me they will ever prove invaluable as they are the only mirrors which reflect the Images of my friends oh! for a peep at "the *Convent* of Keswick" to hold sweet converse with the *sisters* in idea.[2] I am often with you. Margaret pretends to say that she can tell whenever I am thinking of Frances and yourself, she takes it for granted that you are the Genius's which preside over my *brown study's*.

It is a fortnight since we returned from "the back woods" and indeed were uncertain whether we should venture down this winter for at one time a visit was hourly expected from the Enemy and all was commotion, however they now seem lulled into a temporary security the fortifications progress slowly, there is a great want of public spirit with us – Savannah has become an altered place, once characters of respectability were at the head of affairs, but now it is ruled by a set of *Yankees* who have come hither for the purpose of *gain*, they bawl out *equality* and by maneuvering get all the offices of trust and emolument and the natives are kept out of view entirely – Mr. McAllister is now Mayor of the Town, he came out with a *flaming* proclamation, treated the body corporate with wine etc. and by that means has become a popular character. I wish Mary you could see him invested in his new dignity, he seems so happy and looks as if the fate of Empires rested upon his shoulders "Like the sun he shines on all alike"[3] and a stranger to view him for the first time, would be very apt to mistake him for a *Philanthropist*.

I was very *shocked* at the hardships with which busy rumor has dealt with my fair fame, who could have told you that I (who am such an admirer of the Christian faith) was engaged to "an *elegant Jew*." I am glad you contradicted it for neither *Jew* nor *Gentile* has any chance of drawing me as a *prize* in the great lottery of matrimony. I am too great a lover of *liberty* to resign it particularly to an Israelite besides I belong to a family

devoted to "single blessedness"[4] therefore my dear Mary believe any thing you hear of me sooner than that I am going to be married, not that I am an enemy to the *holy institution* I approve highly of the state when two persons enter into it from disinterested affection and when there exists a congeniality of character, but I have always thought the number of happy matches considerably less than unhappy and always conclude that there are faults on both sides, among the whole circle of my acquaintances I know of but one couple who came up to my idea of a *rational* pair.

I was charmed by your description of a *female* Paragon, she must be for a Woman as uncomparable as "Cousin Joe" is for a man. I should like vastly to see the "most captivating of human Beings." I have often heard Mrs. Bryan speak in raptures of him how fortunate it is that he is a married man or all hearts even the most *adamantine* would yield to the power of so much perfection. I wish I knew some interesting Being to describe to you in return for your Portrait of Miss M, but what would it avail if I did, for my Talent for description is too slender to do justice to a *Paragon.*

Do you not Mary admire goodness more than you used to? I once thought a character interesting that did not contribute to the amusement of others but I look now more to the qualities of the heart than the head and if a person is amiable and affectionate in disposition I can excuse the want of mental endowments for how few are favored by nature with a good understanding and an amiable temper.

I recollect to have heard of our "*fascinating* friend" Mr. Wright becoming a Benedict,[5] and now I join my *congratulations* with yours on the birth of an heir who I hope will possess "the Fathers *lustre.*"[6] I confess that *his image* will never be erased from my mind he is always the *hero of my Ballstown Tales.* How wonderful that he should have married a fine Woman, her taste must have been very dissimilar to *ours.*

Melancholy news my dear Mary it is said that the Wasp is captured by the Lacedaemonian a very cannonade was heard off our Bar yesterday and the upshot of this day is that the gallant Blakely surrendered after a long resistance to a force greatly superior.[7] Captain Downs one of the Hero's of Valpraiso has come on to take possession of the Epervier, he is a handsome graceful looking officer rather delicate for a sailor, but I hope he will prove himself as *invincible* as the rest, it readily appears as if our infant Navy was destined to prop the glory of the nation.

Your Cousin Ignatius, now Colonel Few,[8] is stationed here he commands the militia in this district and is said to be an excellent officer, do you remember what *bitter foes* we were and how he delighted in tormenting me – he married about two years ago to a beautiful girl of Columbia County but a *terrible vixen* and she has made him lead a miserable life ever since.

Have you been *blest* by a sight of "his serene Dullness" since you wrote. Take good care of your letters, for he is famous for *peeping* into the concerns of others, and I have heard that a seal is not held sacred by him, so great a thirst has he for knowledge.

Mrs. Campbell, who I believe you are acquainted with has a daughter.

Farewell – write to me soon and let your letter be a long one and do not omit giving our united loves to all the family and accept dearest of Marys the good wishes of a sincere friend. MT

1. This phrase is a misquotation or adaptation of the first line of Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, which reads "In these deep solitudes and awful cells."

2. It has proved impossible to identify the phrase "Convent of Keswick."

3. Probably a variation on "Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere." *Twelfth Night*, 3.1.

4. The phrase "single blessedness" is to be found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1.1.

5. This may be a reference to Benedick in *Much Ado about Nothing*, who began the play opposed to marriage but ends by capitulating.

6. Thomson, *The Seasons*, "Spring," line 37.

7. Captain Johnston Blakely (1781–1814), who commanded the sloop *Wasp*, was awarded a gold medal by the U.S. Congress in 1814 for the capture of the British sloop *Reindeer*. He was lost at sea in the same year.

8. Ignatius Alphonso Few married Selina Carr in 1811.

9 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 17 JANUARY 1815

With delight do I peruse your letters dear Mary for most forcibly they recall to memory "the *Times of yore*" that halcyon period when "the heart promised what the fancy drew."[1] Many changes and some melancholy ones have indeed occurred since our separation the silent flight of Time has not been wholly unmarked, yet not one of our *airy* visions have been realized, still I *venerate* the spot where they originated for it was consecrated to *sober sentiment* as well as *elevated* mirth, yes, the *garret window*

will never lose its empire over *your Molly's* imagination. Cowper celebrated a sofa[2] and why should not we (who to be sure are *Genius's* of a lesser order) do justice to a window, particularly as the *prospect* from it, was so rich, so variegated, so full of all that could *fascinate* the eyes, alas! "Memory but tells that such things have been, And sad reflection adds that they are past."[3]

Christmas passed gloomily with us, it is to me the most unpleasant season of the year for I cannot avoid contrasting the present with the past; in the careless happy days of childhood I was wont to hail its approach with rapture, but it is different now, several of the Friends who used to convene with us around the festival board and whose smiling faces and good wishes always gladdened my heart, are now the Inhabitants of another world while their bodies moulder in the silent tomb their souls I trust are happy, in a few fleeting years how many links in the chain of human affections are dissolved by the uncaring hand of Death but I will not dwell on a subject so replete with gloom, but congratulate my beloved Friends on the new year, may it dear Mary prove a happy one to you, may "kindred love and family repose"[4] by its mild and cheering influence brighten each day, in short may you be as happy as you deserve what more can I wish you – nothing.

Must I applaud the wise determination of the *Fair Nun of Keswick Convent?* I think you are right not to make any rash vows, in this *Shivalric* age, for it is probable some dauntless son of Mars might prove your heart not invulnerable, and by his graceful evolutions induce you to surrender after a short siege. What think you of a Chrogan or an Appling – the latter is a Georgian and if I mistake not your *first love.* I think you told me you were *smitten* with a little Boy in Columbia by that name, but I do not think that I can give my consent to any but a naval or military character so take care Molly how you smile for I never saw a Man formed for you, do not let this compliment make you too vain for I dare say the Universe or rather the United States contains your *kindred* spirit only I have not been fortunate enough to encounter the *charming unknown.* I know exactly what kind of *animal* would suit your Ladyship and should like to meet with him, he must be not the *counterpart* but the very reverse of our *old friend* Mr. Wright, in fact I should expect him to be wise as well as virtuous, but if I continue in this strain I shall present you with a *visionary* Hero very soon and as *reality* is the order of the times that would never do.

I have never viewed the state of "single blessedness" with horror, on the contrary think it far preferable to marrying for convenience etc. Still a married woman is always of more consequence than a single one, it requires a vast deal of Independence for an *Old Maid* and a variety of resources to bear up against the might of an unfeeling world, the most charming woman I know is "an Invariable" she combines all the delicacy of female refinement with a masculine understanding, she has wit and much generosity of mind, very sprightly and fascinating in conversation and although the greatest portion of her life has been spent in the gay world where nature bends to fashion, she is artless and unaffected, but she wants the charm of life sympathy, she is too apt to fly from scenes where sorrow reigns.

I am sorry to hear that the *Miss Fews* have established the same character for Pride in New York, that the *Miss Telfairs* have in Savannah, it is unfortunate but I know from experience that it is impossible to do away public opinion it is so very inveterate. I like you think myself destitute of *false pride* it is a mean contemptible passion but there is a *proper pride* which every human being ought to possess a pride that deters us from committing a little action and which I hope never to lose – perhaps your unpopularity arises from the same cause of ours you have not a general acquaintance and are not deceitful enough to appear interested enough in people whose every work is calculated to create *a yawn*, there is not greater *love* than to be compelled to associate with beings who awaken no faculty either of mind or Soul.

We have received very alarming intelligence, the British have landed a large force consisting of two thousand Blacks on Cumberland Island (Georgia) two expresses have arrived from there and it is reasonable to expect that Savannah the emporium of the State will not escape the inhuman Cockburn[5] is Commander and every thing is to be dreaded for no doubt a number of slaves will flock to his standard. The southern states are in a more perilous situation than the northern. However we have an upland retreat there is consolation in that – but then lives which we hold dear as our own will be exposed oh! I cannot bear to think of it. *The Mayor* has no time now for scandal he is obliged to give up the concerns of others for the public good.

Harriett[6] has for some time been considered a young Lady, she has improved very much the most striking trait in her character is *prudence* a most

uncommon one for a young Girl, such extreme caution is very rare, I wish I had a little of it for my tongue must always give vent to my thoughts. Farewell ever your affectionate Mary.

1. Samuel Rogers, *The Pleasures of Memory. In Two Parts* (London, 1792), Part 1, line 20. See also Letter 94, note 2.

2. William Cowper, *The Task: A Poem in Six Books* (London, 1785), Book I, "The Sofa."

3. The two lines beginning "Memory but tells" are from "An Elegy" by Lebid Ben Rabiat Alamary, a native of Yemen and a contemporary of Mahomet. There is no record of when and where Mary Telfair came across this poem.

4. Edward Young, *The Brothers: A Tragedy* (London, 1753), 1:1.

5. Rear Admiral Sir George Cockburn (1772–1853), commander of the British forces, who in 1814 set fire to many parts of Washington, D.C.

6. Possibly Harriet Campbell, the daughter of Macartan and Sarah Fenwick Campbell. Her half-sister was Sarah Jones (1789–1834), a cousin to Mary Telfair. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 416.

10 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, N.D. 1815[1]

The balmy influence of Peace, with all the vivifying joys which sports in its train, has been a source of real delight to your Molly, who was tired of "Wild Wars deadly blast" and now hails "gentle peace" as the harbinger of every good – my spirits were so very low in consequence of the meditated attack on Savannah that I thought nothing else in this vast expanse of Earth could renovate them, but I was mistaken the intelligence of Jacksons[2] brilliant victory, caused the glimmering taper of Hope (which was nearly extinguished) to emit one ray of joy to illumine my *benighted* soul, which was lost in the thrice happy tidings of peace. How gloriously has the War terminated on our side, we cannot exult too much in the splendid achievements of our Country Men – I would not pluck one leaf from the laurel wreath of Fame, but I cannot help thinking Genl Scott Gaines[3] is completely outvied by this *peerless Hero*, he must indeed be a noble Fellow, and valours favorite Son. How I should like to become acquainted with him if his conversation is as captivating as his style of writing, he must be *too fascinating* I heard a singular story respecting him, and which I hope is not true; as it is somewhat tinged with *romance*. I will relate it to you. An intimate Friend of the Generals who had not long been bound in the *silken*

fetters of Hymen determined on practising a harmless joke, and requested to introduce him to a beautiful Girl at the same time concealing her name, the uncommon lovliness of the Lady completely subdued our Hero's heart and he became so marked in his attentions that his Friend became seriously alarmed and drew him aside to request that he would not be quite so devoted to his Wife, The General in a chivalric tone, demanded satisfaction for the insult – they fought and his Friend fell and the Widow united her fate with that of the *immortal* Jackson.[4] Is there not something horrid in this Tale? I have heard it from many sources but feel inclined to doubt its veracity. I too feel glad that Virginia the most boasting state in the union has not the honor of claiming this champion for his Countrys rights, some say that he is a native of the Emerald Isle others that he is a Carolinian certain it is that he has proved himself an American *in deeds* if not in birth – I do not generally like the South Carolinians, they are too fond of pomp & parade & pride themselves quite too much on their wealth indeed they think of themselves as the *nobility* of America the Virginians appear to posses their foibles but are so generally superior in point of talents that there is no comparison between them but I like the Kentuckians, they pretend *to nothing*, and are capable of *everything* they have certainly evinced more patriotism this war than the citizens of any other State indeed they seem to be soldiers by nature.

It needs not any other inducement but the society of the Friends I love to tempt me to brave *"the Highway"* nothing would afford me more pleasure than to visit you at Richmond Hill that dear delightful spot whose woods witnessed our sports, it was Childhoods Edens bower and to revisit those haunts would afford me the most exquisite pleasure. But I fear the day is yet far distant ere I shall accomplish a visit to the North, to tell you the truth I should be almost afraid to visit those delightful regions, for the attachment I formed during my stay there for the Country, the climate, and above all for the Friends, rendered me so perfectly happy there, that I never could like my native state afterwards, the only solitary charm it possessed was that of containing near and dear relations. If I could prevail on that Bachelor Brother of mine Josiah to Escort me as far as New York, I would then give him a *Furlough* to seek his pleasure, to roam at large oh! that I had the eloquence of Cicero I would employ it on this occasion, but I fear it would take a *smoother* tongue than mine to induce the Hermit to

leave his green fields, he promised Sarah & myself last summer to escort us to the Virginia Springs but when the time arrived his affairs required his presence and you know we women cannot move *without a Man* – Alexander cannot leave Mamma & my Brother Thomas is a *married* man so with three Brothers I have not one at my service is it not provoking? The *little Beau* of *sliding* memory has become a grave personage, he looks as if he had the weight of Empire upon his shoulders, we call him *the old Don* when he sports his punctilious notions. I like a little Pride and a little reserve but there is such a thing you know as having too much.

Sarahs Hero, as you style the gallant Captain,[5] has not yet returned he left Washington about ten days ago, my brother Thomas wrote me. You would not admire him very much, he is amiable, handsome, and very genteel but you I believe do not like *fashionable* men, he is exactly what the generality of Women admire, for he is fond of the society of the Fair and very respectful in his attention to them, he received his education in Edinburgh but is a *good Republican.*

But here I am giving you a detail of a person you will probably never see unless you visit Georgia which is a thing I dare not hope for as much as I wish it. Adieu remember me & the rest of the Family to Mrs. Few, Frances & Matilda & believe me ever yours Mary

1. The date is indicated by mention of the Battle of New Orleans, 8 January 1815, and the ratification of the Treaty of Ghent the following month. It is impossible to identify the exact date of composition, although the letter's content suggests that it was written some time in the spring or early summer of 1815.

2. General, later president, Andrew Jackson.

3. This seems to refer to Generals Winfield Scott (1786–1866) and Edmund P. Gaines (1777–1839), both of whom served on the Canadian frontier during the War of 1812.

4. This is a muddled account of Jackson's marriage. There was no duel, but he married his wife before her divorce was complete.

5. Captain George Haig, Sarah Telfair's future husband. The couple married on 25 April 1815. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 431.

II SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 19 JUNE 1815

This morning my dear Mary the silence of months was interrupted by your very, *very* welcome letter which was a precious sight to me. I did

not think myself forgotten or neglected but judged of your feelings by my own, for I have never known any one in all "my wanderings through this world of care"[1] whose heart beats more responsive to my own.

It was with much concern that I heard of the loss of your beloved & lamented friend, a character so amiable affectionate, and disinterested must awaken admiration in the coldest heart, how exalted then must be the attachment inspired in those who knew him long and intimately – I never saw any one who interested me so much on so short an acquaintance. How many changes take place in a few months, and what melancholy ones! but it is necessary that we should be weaned from this world after all there is no happiness, no substantial enjoyment to be found in it, often, very often when I reflect on the mutability of human affairs, the trials and sorrows we are subject to in our earthly pilgrimage I feel ready to exclaim "how weary, flat, stale and unprofitable, seem to me all the uses of this world."[2] I am rejoiced dear Mary to hear of your father's recovery. I view in him the only surviving friend of my Father as such I have always esteemed him, and hope he will be spared to you many years.

You were misinformed respecting Sarah's[3] Infant – it is not a daughter – but the sweetest little Boy I ever beheld he resembles neither of his Parents. We all think him very much like a brother of Captain Haigs. I am sure I could not love this little fellow more than if he was my own child.

We all expect to leave this for the upcountry the ensuing week we shall visit my Brother Thomas – poor Mrs. Telfair[4] is in a great deal of distress she has lately lost her mother who for three years has been gradually declining, she was an excellent woman and her loss will be severely felt both by her family and society at large for her house was the seat of hospitality she expired with the utmost calmness and serenity, which is a source of great consolation to her relatives.

Alexander returned from Cuba about three weeks ago, improved in his health, and pleased with his excursion, he thinks the Island of Cuba an enchanting spot it exhibits all the varieties of scenery & soil and only wants virtue to render it a Paradise on Earth, but the Spaniards are an indolent, avaricious, blood thirsty race, no tie is held sacred & no crime too enormous for them to commit, if any other Person but my Bother had related some anecdotes of Spanish treachery & cruelty I should have deemed them fabulous and only calculated to figure in the pages of a romance.

You will see Sarah Jones[5] and Harriett Campbell in the course of the summer, as they contemplate visiting New York – Philadelphia though is to be their resting place. I wish you would return with them in the fall & spend the winter with me. I could offer no inducement to tempt you but the mildness of a southern climate and my society. Good compensation you would think for leaving New York.

You saw Mr. & Mrs. Hunter last summer, he is now laboring under a most distressing complaint – consumption and I fear will never recover he was taken with a slight cough in January which has increased most alarming and is now confined entirely to his House. She does not appear at all sensible of his situation which is a circumstance very much to be regretted.

Give my love to all your family in which mine unites and know me to be unalterably yours. MT. PS Direct your future letters to Washington, Wilkes County, Georgia and let me hear frequently during the summer. Sarah Jones will present you with a small parcel from yours MT. Did you receive a jar of marmalade in the winter. Mr. Howard[6] put it on board one of his vessels and I wrote a few lines to Frances at the same time.

1. Mary Telfair probably came across this line in either John Gay, *Trivia, or the art of walking the streets of London* (London, 1716), 1:75, or Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village* (London, 1770), line 83.

2. *Hamlet*, 1.2.

3. It has proved impossible to identify Sarah.

4. Margaret Long, the daughter of Colonel Nicholas Long, of Washington County, Georgia. She and Mary's brother Thomas Telfair were married in 1809. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 423, 430.

5. Sarah Gibbons Jones, the daughter of George and Sarah Jones, was the sister of Noble Wimberley Jones II and a cousin to Mary Telfair. She married Alfred Cuthbert, a close friend of Alexander Telfair, in 1823; and in 1834 she died in childbirth. See Letter 68.

6. Probably either Charles or Benjamin Howard, both of Savannah, and both friends of Mary Telfair.

12 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 6 FEBRUARY [? 1816][1]

It appears to me a long time dearest Mary since you & I have held a little confab, and what has been the cause of your silence? mine has proceeded from not being able to find any thing in the form of news to

entertain you with, and I very well know how much you dislike *stupid letters*, but I am determined (as I feel in a communicative mood) to *unfold* myself, and endeavor to prove myself so *very agreeable* that my dear Mary, (who I love more than I can tell her) may read three long pages without a *solitary yawn* and when she has finished the *important budget* she will acknowledge to herself that however remiss Mary Telfair may appear, she will never cease to take a warm interest in every Individual at Richmond Hill *Jemmy & March* not excepted, particularly as they formed so picturesque a scene rambling over the lawn and through the woods, if I had been a Painter instead of a *Dreamer* I should have been tempted to take a sketch of the little Cupid & his sagacious companion. I have encountered no *interesting* characters this winter to tell you of although there are many Strangers in Savannah. Mrs. Gray has arrived but left Town immediately for her Mothers Plantation therefore I had not the pleasure of seeing her. Ann is very much admired, some think her very beautiful others very elegant, and she is generally acknowledged very pleasant or to express myself according to the general phrase *very fascinating*. I certainly think her the most charming Woman *without a soul* I ever met with, do not let Ann Wallace hear that I beg of you however you may tell her that I spent an evening in company with *her* Lord Byron, who was occasionally lost in reverie, however he told me of the present he had received from her through the medium of Miss Clay.[2]

I could not avoid wishing for you most fervently at a lecture given by the interesting & eloquent Oglevie, it was on Duelling which he traced to its origin a single Combat in the age of chivalry he drew so *exquisite* a picture of a Tournament, his language was so eloquent his description so glowing, that I was lost in admiration and mentally exclaimed how my dear Mary would enjoy this you would have forgotten for a moment *Cousin Joe* and all the *choice spirits* that have hitherto charmed you with their superior wisdom – I almost lost my heart not only with the orator but his Character, he is so much of a Philanthropist, I should like to be acquainted with him yet I am sure I never could summon courage enough to enter into conversation with so great a Critic he lodges next door and we sometimes have a view of his emaciated figure walking to & fro in the Balcony – he must be a miserable Man although so eminently gifted by Nature & Education for he exists on opium and unless under its influence is perfectly melancholy &

abstracted, he has been confined to his chamber ever since he held forth his syren strains of eloquence owing to the exertion he made, I doubt whether his life will be prolonged many months for he appears to be in a rapid decline – I must tell you of a daring act of mine, I sent over *some delicacies* fitted to the palate of an Invalid in Mammas name, Mrs. Bryan was here at the time and declared he should know from whom it came, I begged & entreated she would keep it a profound secret but she persists in declaring that I shall receive Mr. Ogelvies thanks, I hope he will not think I have gone *ages in love*, or am an admirer of the mysterious – farewell to Genius in the Name of Ogelvie!

I got a letter a few days ago from Mrs. Telfair she mentioned all the Fews with whom she was delighted but particularly your Mamma & yourself – what *arts* did you practice Molly to captivate her so completely and how came you to rival both Frances & Matilda of course Brother Tom thinks you are a *Prodigy* or *his Wife would not* for she seldom differs from him in opinion – I must tell him when I see him that you say he is a *charming Fellow* and I shall have the pleasure of hearing him launch forth in your praise which will be as gratifying to hear my Friend highly spoken of as myself – If he had been a *single* man I would have given him to you provided you would have deemed him worthy of acceptance – I think you would like Alexander he is handsomer and more polished in manners with more versatile talents, but he is not *half as interesting* because he has less enthusiasm but I forget that I am talking of relations, but I feel no reserve towards my dear Mary.

Sarah Jones sent me a small trunk with 5 yds of muslin to make a morning dress & begged me to ask you to receive it and have it made up for her, by Miss Marshal in Cedar Street in the most fashionable style & trimmed with the most fashionable trimming she has sent an old black dress by way of guide to know her size, she also begs you to get her a handsome dress Turban either of Crape or silk lace or a morning cap of muslin – she begs if there is any money left after getting those things that you will get a painted velvet card case & a painted ditto box, and that you will pay the freight of the Trunk out of the enclosed & ask Miss Marshall for the proper pattern.

I put a pattern of cambric for a Morning Dress for Miss Shannon to make for me with two yds of trimming in it to insert she knows my size & length being the same as her sisters. I wish it made in a morning Dress the

latest french pattern & if trimming is required will you purchase the muslin out of the twenty dollar bill enclosed in this – and I must also ask you to send a very fine straw bonnet of Absolam newest shape & get Madame Boquet to trim it with lilac ribbon and after paying for the making of the Dress Bonnet & Bandbox I will thank you to get me a pr. of lead coloured shoes of Phelps's make – I have enclosed with mine a 50 dollar Bill from Sarah Jones –

I put into the Trunk directed to you a few trifles a Bag for you one for Matilda also a lace Handkerchief for you. I regret that I could not get Atala & Louisa[3] decently bound for they were the only copies in Town but I heard you express a desire to read them & I hope the intrinsic merit of them will atone for the coarseness of the exterior – As Mr. Kollock[4] is *my Paragon*, I have sent his memoirs to Frances & regret that she does not know the author for *he is not like the common herd of men.* Mamma unites with me in love to your Mamma – Do not forget to remember me to your Papa, a great deal of love to Frances & a kiss to the gentle *Medora.*[5] The trunk went in the Tybee in company with a Barrel & two boxes I hope the sweet meats will not get up sett your affectionate Mary

1. The date is indicated by mention of James Ogilvie (1760–1820), a Scottish immigrant who lectured throughout the southern United States and for a while was employed by the South Carolina College in Columbia. His book *Philosophical Essays* was published in Philadelphia in 1816. Ogilvie returned to Scotland, where he is believed to have committed suicide. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), 7:570.

2. Ann Wallace and Anne Clay were both close friends of Mary Telfair. Ann Wallace divided her time between Savannah and New York. Anne Clay, whose family had homes in Bryan County, Georgia, as well as Savannah, acquired a certain fame in the Lowcountry for her interest in educating enslaved children. Like Mary Telfair, she remained single. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 417, 426.

3. François-René de Chateaubriand, *Atala: ou, Les amours de deux sauvages dans le desert* (Paris, 1801). It seems likely that *Louisa* was [Lucy Brewer], *The Adventures of Lucy Brewer, alias Louisa Baker* (New York, 1815), which was republished as Lucy Brewer, *An Affecting Narrative of Louisa Baker, a Native of Massachusetts, Who, in Early Life Having Been Shamefully Seduced, Deserted Her Parents, and Enlisted in Disguise on Board an American frigate as a Marine, Where, in Two or Three Engagements, She Displayed the Most*

Heroic Fortitude, and was Honorably Discharged, Therefrom, a Few Months since, Without a Discovery of Her Sex Being Made (Portsmouth, N.H., 1816).

4. This may be a reference to the Reverend Henry Kollock, the pastor of Savannah's Independent Presbyterian Church.

5. "Medora" was a slave girl who appears in Byron, *The Corsair*.

13 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 17 FEBRUARY 1816

It is indeed one of *your rights* dear Mary to hear frequently from me and I should *wrong* myself did I not occasionally convey my thoughts in the form of a letter to a Friend so beloved, for to hear from *you*, to receive your opinions on various subjects and above all to know that *you* still love me will ever cause the chord of joy to vibrate through my heart – many are the painful moments I feel on reflecting that one whose society would constitute so powerful a charm should be so far separated from me, this makes me regret that I have not a more *expansive* heart but alas! numbers can never crowd into it and I cannot shake off that *frigid indifference* I feel on entering a Drawing room filled with *combustibles* of various descriptions.

Savannah has been gay this winter if the idea of gaiety can be associated with *The Conventions, public Balls*, & card partys. I have partaken very modestly of them, for they excite so little interest in me that I always rejoice when the toils of the evening are over and never fail to wish that I could form a little society of those I admire for their mental endowments, and love for their amiable qualities, I should then be so selfish that I would never roam beyond that sphere.

My aunt at present resides in Savannah you have often heard me speak of my cousin,[1] they are both elegant Women possessed of an uncommon share of intelligence & taste and prove a valuable accession to our circle. I wish you knew them, for I am sure you would pronounce them to be quite above the common sphere, their information has been gained as much from society as from Books which gives a pleasing variety to their Minds & conversation.

How have you been employed lately & what have you been reading. I am at present reading the life & writings of Burns.[2] I was induced to wade through three large volumes from hearing a criticism on his characters & some of his verses recited by Oglevie, who has paid us a visit. I was *struck mute* with astonishment when this *Hero of the Rostrum* entered, but grad-

ually recovered my composure, he commenced one Character, Margaret & myself listened with attention to his superior eloquence, you cannot imagine a voice so rich in melodious strains and when animated a countenance of greater brilliancy. He described Colonel Cummings in Language more glowing than ever was portrayed in the annals of romance. *I allowed a little* for the enthusiasm of the orator who appears to me the strangest & most inconsistent of human Beings, *vanity* & *affection* is very conspicuous in all his actions and while declaiming in public he inspires a variety of feelings, in his last oration which was certainly very elegant, I felt admiration, astonishment & contempt the latter was occasioned by his excessive vanity. Yet his character is as uncommon as his Genius, the former is marked by a generosity bordering on profusion indeed a total disregard of money a Perfect Philanthropist in every respect, but all those noble qualities which place him so much above his species are obscured by his mode of life he is subject to such depression of spirits that he lives almost on Opium to raise them, he wanders from place to place like a troubled spirit & derives some gratification from the avidity with which the young seek his society and the enthusiastic admiration he excites among them.

If you were to hear his eloquence you would for *a moment* forget *Cousin Joe* & think he had his equal, but you would naturally say, one is more susceptible to happiness than the other & then the appearance & manners of one so superior to the other – for Ogelvie is ugly and when not enveloped in his Grecian {*illegible*} very awkward.

I hope Sally's visit to a distant region may prove of essential service to her health & that she may receive every delicate & kind attention from the relation with whom she goes, tell her I am much obliged to her for the offer of "the little Captain" but that I am sure he would *refuse* me particularly as he once bowed lowly at the shrine of *Beauty Wit* & Fashion.

Give my best wishes & love to my dear Mrs. Few, tell her I shall ever think with gratitude of her affectionate friendship to me & say all that is *pretty* to Matilda. Frances must write to me to convince me that she cares something about me with all *my faults*. I am sorry I could not send my promised Phiz[5] to you in the trunk but I will endeavor (notwithstanding my aversion to seeing my own ugliness) to summon courage to sit for it & send it by Mrs. McShinne who speaks of returning in April. Farewell my dear Mary, let me hear very soon from you and believe me to be your affectionate Mary.

1. The aunt was Elizabeth Bellinger Telfair, the wife of Edward Telfair's brother William, who had died in 1812. The cousin was one of their daughters, either Eliza or Margaret, both of whom died in 1844. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 44–45.

2. James Currie, *The Entire Works of Robert Burns: with an account of his life, and a criticism of his writings* (London and Edinburgh, 1800; Baltimore, 1815 and 1816).

3. Here Mary Telfair is referring to her physiognomy.

14 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 28 OCTOBER 1816

It was my intention dear Mary to have written to you the day after my arrival, but I was prevented from doing so by leaving Town. It was so exceeding warm and unhealthy here that I accepted the invitation of a Friend to spend a few days on Wilmington Island, and found the change very agreeable, now the weather is becoming cooler, and a frost is anxiously expected for we always view it as the harbinger of health, there have been a number of deaths, although not among our acquaintances still it tends to make a melancholy impression on the minds of those who daily witness their fellow mortals to the grave.

We had an unusual passage for the season for in five days were wafted to our native shore, without a relation to welcome us, for my Brothers are both in the interior of the state and we really felt at first quite desolate & forlorn, but begin to feel a little more at home than we did. I am in hopes that Mrs. Telfair will spend the winter with us and her *beautiful Cousin* who Sarah Jones portrayed in such glowing colors. We also expect Colonel & Mrs. Long,[1] so we shall muster a strong family retinue. I love a large circle around the hearth in Winter it is so enlivening & always recalls to mind some of the most beautiful and descriptive lines in Cowper.

I have just finished reading Glenarvon – Mr. Cuthbert[2] lent it to Alexander who expressed the warmest admiration for it – but to me it is a *vile* production neither morality nor nature is to be met with in it. I should pronounce it to be the production of a madman, Calantha's is a most absurd character, & I cannot discover any resemblance between Glenarvon & Lord Byron – unless it consists in the following expression which struck my fancy as being original, forcible & descriptive "he has an imagination of fire playing around a heart of ice."

The books you gave me proved very interesting sea companions, {*illegible*} is a pathetic little story and was in great demand on board the Aurora. Miss Bond (the friend of Ann Clay) was my principal associate on board. I

found her disposition in some respects congenial with my own. We talked by night & by day for the tranquil enjoyment of sleep was denied us and we filled up the interval with conversation – the *knocking* at my heart as *your* sage Doctor styled it has nearly vanished. I sometimes feel it slightly after waking in the morning or after meals, but it is so trifling compared to what it was in New York, that I do not regard it.

Captain Haig has been bled four times for his complaint since he came & Dr. Kollock[3] says it is a wonder that he never suffocated or expired in a fit for that his case is a very alarming one but a blister on his breast & a loss of blood has relieved him very much and I am in hopes he will soon be entirely restored to health. Mrs. Howard arrived four days after she is not yet at housekeeping, the furniture not being opened. I saw Cousin Ben yesterday he looked as usual happy & contented. Has Jabez *torn* himself from New York, or does he still *haunt* a certain House in Park place, and what has been the result, has he told the tender tale in *broken sentences* or {*illegible*} come tell me all about it – and I will be *very* secret.[4]

Frances I suppose has returned by this time give my love to her. I know she does not care much for me *nowadays*, but ask her to write to me and let me know of all the pleasures she enjoyed on the North river.

Have you paid Phyfe a visit & what does he say about the Secretary? As I feel very stupid this morning my dear Molly I will say good bye for the present, with my best love to all in which the family unite.[5]

PS Keep the change of the hundred after you settle with Phyfe as I may trouble you soon if you have no objection to being my Banker. Yours sincerely MT Write immediately for I *long* to hear from my dear Mary.

1. The parents of Mary Telfair's sister-in-law, Margaret Long Telfair.

2. Lady Caroline Lamb, *Glenarvon* (London, 1816). "Mr. Cuthbert" is Albert Cuthbert, the son of Seth Jones Cuthbert. A boyhood friend of Alexander Telfair's, he graduated from Princeton in 1803 and later worked as an attorney in Savannah. He was also elected to the United States House of Representatives. In 1823 he married Alexander and Mary Telfair's cousin Sarah Jones.

3. Dr. Lemuel Kollock was born in Wrentham, Massachusetts, in 1766. After studying medicine he settled in Savannah, where he practiced his profession and, in 1804, was one of the founders of the Georgia Medical Society. He married Maria Campbell, daughter of Macartan Campbell and Sarah Fenwick Campbell. Kollock died in Savannah of a "liver

affection" in April 1823 at the age of fifty-eight. *Register of Deaths, Savannah, Ga.*, 4 vols. (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1989), 4:147.

4. Jabez Young Jackson (1790–?) was the son of Governor James Jackson of Georgia. He was elected to serve as a Jacksonian in both the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth U.S. Congresses. Jackson, who appears never to have married, lived mainly in Habersham County, Georgia.

5. Duncan Phyfe (1768–1854), a furniture designer of Scottish ancestry, settled in New York City in 1790 and opened a highly successful furniture store. His neoclassical designs helped define the so-called Federal Style of the early National period. See Nancy McClelland Duncan, *Duncan Phyfe and the English Regency, 1795–1830* (New York and London, 1980).

15 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 24 MAY 1818

I have been expecting a letter from you a long time my dear Mary and this morning my hopes were realized, how I regret to hear that you suffer so much from your eyes they will be well enough, they *must* be well enough to *see* me. We have no fixed plan for the summer it rests entirely with my Brother his wishes are ours – Sarah has no wish to travel neither has Mamma – I should like to make the tour of Pensylvania I hear it is the finest country to travel through in the union, wherever I am dear Mary I hope you will be with me for it is the only pleasure I look forward to indeed not until the last few days have I felt an inclination to leave Georgia – Alexander has had an attack of fever and while absent from us all fortunately he was with Mr. Campbell near Augusta where he had medical aid & kind friends. Sarah's health is improving and I am in hopes she will benefit more than any of us from a change of climate. You will find her very much altered she bears her misfortunes with great firmness and although grief has preyed upon her form yet her manner is so calm & composed and even chearful at times that only myself know half her sufferings – Mrs. Telfair is with her father in Wilkes she was compelled to leave us on account of her situation she expects to be confined very soon we were in hopes the event would have taken place before we left there, Sarah got a letter a few days ago she has two sweet little Girls the eldest[1] is a child of uncommon capacity we all think her a prodigy her appearance too is uncommonly interesting I have sometimes thought her a little like Frances she is excessively pale with a roman nose, dark blue eyes and very red lips either very animated

or very inanimate no medium about her very apt to take violent fancies or aversions Alexander is the only being she fears she was very fond of me but never obeyed me – she requires very peculiar management and unless her mind is cultivated and her feelings properly directed will make an unhappy character. I have sett for hours & listened to her with more interest than many grown persons but I must not tire your patience with a {*illegible*} which though interesting to some cannot be so to you. The Barrel of Potatoes came from us I thought you would recognize my hand was the reason I did not mention indeed I thought if you got them it was not of much consequence who they came from. Alexander desires to be remembered to my dear Mrs. Few & to thank her for her kind letter. Give my love to all and believe me to be ever your affectionate Mary

1. A reference to her niece, Margaret Long Telfair.

16 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 1 JUNE 1818

What dear Mary has been the occasion of your long, *very long* silence, two letters of mine still remain unanswered must I acknowledge the truth and tell you that I have felt a little *piqued* at your neglect of an old and sincere friend. I have repeatedly intended writing to ascertain the cause of your silence but my *predominant passion* pride deterred me, for I really sometimes think and *fear* that you have forgotten me and unless you answer this immediately and tell me that I still retain a little portion of your heart I shall conclude some new friend has totally supplanted me and I am so *selfish* that I wish to monopolize as much of your love as can be spared from your own family.

Sometimes I am induced to think that the Servant neglected to take my letter to the office and then again I fear that some part of your family have been ill – so do relieve me from suspense by writing & letting me know how you all are.

I have nothing dear Mary to say of an entertaining nature. I will reserve all my *anecdotes observations* etc. for verbal communication, they will do to deal out as *precious fragments* on the road to Niagara, next to having a peep at you my fondest aspirations are wafted there, cannot you beat up for *recruits* for that quarter, *Hall* would be too youthful an escort for the

occasion although we found him a very {*illegible*} and attentive Beaver to passack he partly shielded us from the *savage grin* of Hueger, whose *ferocious* aspect Time can never obliterate from the faithful pages of my memory. Ann Clay says (to use her own worldly expression) that he is the *best match* in Carolina now. I had an idea that *his match* was not to be found any where for I should tremble for the happiness of any gentle Damsel who could consent to love honor & *obey* him at the holy altar but if I do not change this theme to a milder one you will think I have lost all claims to "the milk of human kindness"[1] but you know I am not a *general* admirer of the *ruder* sex. I sometimes meet with one who can talk so as to induce me to listen but very, very seldom – but if you show Frances this she will cry out *"the old theme"* which so often grated on her like a piano out of tune, not quite so discordant as the cry of "the boding owl."[2]

The Southrons have already begun to flock to the North, to inhale your delicious breezes and gaze on your wild romantic scenery, as well as your cultivated Farms – How provoking it is that you should have so greatly the advantage over us in every respect. I think between *you & I* the Southward is only fit *for money making Genius's* but this you must keep *profoundly secret.* I dare say whenever you wander *sweet* Broadway you encounter some sallow faces for several *ship loads* have already been transported & I expect Ballstown Springs this season will have two ague & fever tables and the poor *Southerners* will be quite as much abused for their *reserve* & *stiffness* as they were last summer unless Mrs. Philips steps forward again as their champion but I forget that she patronized only Southern *men* she leaves the fair ones to scuffle for themselves as you know they are *very managing.*

The hour for repose draws near and as I feel pretty much overcome by the heat I will say good night speedily. Sarah was confined on the 23rd of May but was so unfortunate as to lose her infant – she is however recovering & will I hope in a few days be quite restored to health. This is the most stupid letter I have ever written to you dear Mary which you may attribute to your silence for there is something so inspiring in your letters that they awaken my dormant faculties which are apt to slumber unless some magic touch calls them into action. Farewell with love to all. I am your sincere, your affectionate Mary. PS What has become of Sally "*tell me all about her.*" I hope *Cousin* Nat acts the character of Benedict as well as that of

honest Tar. How is Ann Wallace remember me to her also to Mrs. & Miss Powell.

1. *Macbeth*, 1.5.
2. Cowper, *The Task*, Book 1, "The Sofa," line 205.

17 MADISON SPRINGS, TENNESSEE, 18 SEPTEMBER 1819

Our sojourn dear Mary affords a striking contrast to yours so striking that I will not attempt to describe it, dreading the effect it may produce on one, a little inclined to be prejudiced against Southern wilds. We have been spending nearly a fortnight here, our object in visiting such an *outlandish* spot was health, and we have been fortunate enough to find it although unattended by pleasure or even comfort. The society is very indifferent, my eye has not lighted upon a *genteel figure*, or my ear regaled by the *silver* sound of sense since I have been here. The women are the most insipid race I ever met with, *and* there is only one man I have talked to and I have been very much pleased with his conversation he is called a man of superior talents, and appears to possess a good deal of feeling, without much refinement, he is married.

Your accusation I must deny the full force of. I can admire a man who is *single*, as a proof of it – my greatest favorite in Savannah is a Coelebs,[1] and what is more will never become a *Benedict* as I am not a *marrying* character it is immaterial to me whether a man is old or young, married or unmarried, so as he has the powers of entertainment.

I give Sarah Haig credit for *embellishing* a slight eulogism into a *marvelous tale* were you to see the object you would laugh a great deal, his manners are not much more polished than Jabez's but he has a fine mind. You must place a high value on this matter for I have no convenient place for writing but I verily believe dear Mary, rather than forego the pleasure of *confabulating* with you, I would employ a *rusty nail* as a pen, may I never have recourse to such an *iron* experiment, but be always an Inhabitant of *the land of quills*. *Geese* are not favorites of mine *in every sense of the word*, but I *venerate* their snowy *plumage* as it affords me an opportunity of conversing with those I love at a great distance – so when I *sacrifice* it shall be to a *Goose*.

Our Willows will never be *twined together*, except in imagination – what

a delightful Bower might not *our useless* land form, *such a union of taste* could not fail to produce one of *arcadian beauty* – you may realize your plans while I only peep occasionally at them. I am doomed to wither and to die in this sultry clime, while you may flourish in a more genial one – our meetings are indeed like "little spots of verdant sunshine scattered along this dreary waste of existence." All our enjoyments are transitory "And such is Human Life so gliding on, It glimmers like a meteor, and is gone."[2]

Do you recollect the walk we took at Morristown on our way to Scholey's mountain when we seated ourselves on the timber to watch the reapers scythe and enjoy the fine scenery which encircled us. I believe the conversation of that hour is more firmly impressed upon my memory than any we ever had – you complained of feeling too old, and I of feeling too young – the effect produced on us was directly opposite, it inspired you with gloom, and me with gaiety – since that period I seem to have passed over twenty years of my life, so very different does every object in the world appear to what it formerly did – what then delighted passes now unheeded; and after all there is no enjoyment beyond the sphere of our own family & friends every day links me close to mine and yet I believe the misery we experience in this world originates in the strength of our attachments. I sometimes wished that I cared for nothing in it then I probably would be no happier for possessing the stoical temper.

Yesterday we received letters from Savannah. I was shocked at hearing of the death of Mrs. Stirk who you have heard me speak of – she was considered very beautiful, and although the mother of four children was a Devotee to Fashion, she was educated by a *titled* Aunt in Edinburgh, and was fitted to dash in the first circles of gaiety and style – she married a Georgia Planter and was made miserable – his fortune was insufficient to gratify her extravagant wishes she lived in retirement & discontent and has fallen in the bloom of youth and beauty a victim to climate away from all her relatives and friends.[3]

Your *tender sympathies* seem to be excited in the cause of S Cecil.[4] I think it doubtful whether she will plight her faith at the altar. Dr. D. is still an invalid an unfortunate wound which he received last fall in a Duel will I suspect "break the knot which love hath tied"[5] he returned much improved in health from Philadelphia, but exposure to the sun united to fatigue has thrown him back again and I should not be surprised if he never

recovers from it, he is an unfortunate young man, he lost his only sister last April, a very amiable girl, his misfortunes make one feel a good will towards him *independent of other considerations*, although he is not an interesting character. He belongs to a class of men that you meet with every day – there is nothing in his manners, conversation or appearance, that would distinguish him from the common order but he has *good feelings* on them do I rely for Sarah's happiness.

Sarah who in *such cases* is endued with more patience says it is a *purely platonic* attachment on both sides. I could think so for she must love him for I cannot think a woman of sense would marry without having any object in view. Sarah has very correct notions of married life – she expects only domestic happiness and has my best wishes for the attainment of it. She never had any romance in her nature, never *dreamed* of *ideal* perfection but calculated on pursuing the *beaten* road to happiness. Catharine Hunter[6] is *violently opposed* to the match, she has an aversion to the poor Doctor. I do not think the dislike founded upon reason – but I never heard her speak well of more than two men – she is very difficult to please – *she has not an eye to popularity*, she smiles graciously on those she likes and treats those she disliked very rudely. I undertook don't laugh to *lecture* her upon the subject she seemed to think my precept better than my example however she has not seen me in company for three years and since that I have undergone a complete reformation – so *revised* and *corrected* that she would recognise only my *little page*.

Give my love to that lazy creature Frances – tell her when the third story receives her again as its inmate I shall expect a folio – she is a *fascinating wretch* with all her failings but don't tell her so, she is already too conceited. How does Matilda come on – remember me also to her – and your Father & Mother. Fare thee well for the present – your sincere Mary. Direct your next letter to Louisville, Georgia – answer this *as soon as you read* it.

1. Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife: Comprehending Observations on Domestic Habits, Manners, Religion and Morals* (London, 1806). More (1745–1833) was an English writer on moral and religious subjects.

2. Samuel Rogers, "Human Life," lines 33–34.

3. Ellen Stirk died of a "Billious Fever" on 26 August 1819 at age twenty-five. *Register of Deaths in Savannah*, 4:20.

4. Sarah Cecil, a close friend of Mary Telfair's.

5. Thomas Campbell, *O'Connor's Child Or, "The Flower of Love-Lies-Bleeding,"* 7.12.

6. Margaret Hunter's daughter, a close friend of Mary Telfair's.

18 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 15 MARCH 1820

We have not *confabulated* together my dear Mary for some time, this silence on my part has not been the result of indifference or a disinclination for your society, but simply owing to the punctuality observed by Frances[1] in her weekly communications, and as she left this morning for Augusta I obey her parting injunction, and turn to you for *consolation.*

F herself so agreeable to all our household (even not excepting the little children) and I may add so necessary to my happiness, that her departure will occasion a sad vacuum in our domestic circle. We have been inseparable, and I have never had an associate in whom I have found the same congeniality. I felt very well satisfied in resigning her to Mr. & Mrs. Cumming who appear to be a charming old couple and I have no doubt she will spend a month very agreeable in Augusta – so soon as she gives me a summons I will journey up for her. We mean to visit a charming old Gentleman & Lady on our way down, and I am in hopes that Aunt Telfair's family will be here on our return so that her taste for novelty and passion for studying character may be gratified.

Would you believe it possible that she went to a Ball last night. Margaret & Harriet Campbell accompanied her they walked about from room to room, made their remarks and returned home at twelve o clock all pretty much fatigued with the scene, but entertained Sarah Haig & myself with their comments. I gave them a *curtain* lecture for not *encouraging* the attentions of a *Nabob* who seldom approaches a Lady, to stand before her & chat was such a *mark* of *distinction* that I was *outrageous* when she told me she made no effort to *detain* him by her side, it was cruel in my *Protégé* to blast the *brilliant* hopes of her Protectress, was it not Molly? Particularly as I with the true spirit of a *Duenna* charged her to look animated, and display the powers of her mind.

Next winter I hope you will prove more obedient. There will be an end to our *harmless* jests for a while but when Fran and myself meet, we shall have accumulated a fresh store of anecdotes, and will again "Vex with mirth the drowsy ear of night."[2] Do not infer from this that we indulge in *revelry*

alone, we are often very *rational* and sometimes our converse assumes a hue too somber, we fly "from grave to gay from serious to reverie."[3]

We have recently had a rich mental banquet in Ivanhoe.[4] We shut ourselves up half a dozen of us, in a snug little room for two rainy days and were highly interested in the fate of Rebecca. She was a noble creature and ought to have been a *Christian*. I think I prefer Walter Scott on scotch ground. The heart of mid Lothian can never be rivalled.[5] Jeannie although born and bred in the humble walks of life is my favorite Heroine, and Effie in spite of her crime interested me most deeply.

This is a lovely season for travelling. I wish Fran had a finer country to travel through, the wild flowers which enamel our plains will delight her, but nothing else. We spent a day at Uncle Jones's[6] plantation while the yellow jasmine was in bloom and enjoyed a walk in the "moss grown alley" which I had planted in *olden* time with a lighter footstep & still lighter heart now I can pace it "musing slow" oh! the blights of Time! how passing great they appear to me even now, what must they be to those who have paced longer this weary round when more spots than one "tell them of enjoyments past" and I may add "of sorrows yet to come"![7]

If Sarah Cecil could read this page she would say her {*illegible*} are about to be realized, she dared to predict that Frances's departure would be the means of drawing *the blues* around me, but I mean to act the philosopher to perfection and chase them boldly from my presence. I must *turn out on duty* and pay a visit to a distressed Damsel, or rather a *forlorn* one do you not envy me the glorious privilege, you who are made of such *charitable* materials. We often praise your self denial and conclude by saying if Mary could hear this witty speech she would lecture us or look disdainfully upon us indeed we say a great many pretty things of you and *think* a great many of ourselves. Keep this however a secret.

Mamma sent to your Mamma a Box containing Georgia Hams in the Eleanor which I hope you received. Your affectionate Mary

1. Frances Few, who had been visiting the Telfairs.

2. Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (London, 1812), Canto One, stanza 2, line 4.

3. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man: Address'd to a Friend.*, 4 vols. (London, 1733–1734), 4, line 379.

4. Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe: A Romance* (Edinburgh and London, 1820).

5. Walter Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian* (Edinburgh, 1818).

6. Probably George Jones (1766–1838), who married Sarah Gibbons Telfair's sister Mary (1761–1792). Jones served in the Georgia House of Representatives and the state Senate. In 1807 he was elected to the U.S. Senate. Five years later he served a term as the mayor of Savannah.

7. William Cowper, "The Shrubbery. Written in a Time of Affliction," 18, 23–24.

19 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 19 JUNE 1821

The only cause I can assign dear Mary for your delinquency is your old and besetting sin – *Laziness*. Months have winged their flight since I last heard from you, however I could not commence my summers sojourn without holding a little parley with dear Molly – I know for the want of your Colleague to infuse a little *energy* into you, that *precious talents* are wasting in the third story, and I need not add *how great will be the loss*. I wish I was your companion for a little while that I might *unbudget*, there is something in the atmosphere of that *sanctum* so congenial to my taste, so favourable to the exercise of the tongue, that I am never so happy nor half so idle as when an inmate of it. This summer will afford a striking contrast to the last I anticipate no pleasure for we are going not to "the land of Cakes & Brither Scotts"[1] but of – Frances may fill up the space as she has tasted of *upland sweets* – you may well call it a beaten path and I may add a *rugged* one. We shall probably explore more of the wilds this summer than we have hitherto done, it will be *a change*, and you know a little novelty even if it does not appear in the most pleasing form is preferable to that *monotonous sameness* inseparable from gazing upon sky, sand, and pine trees which is the only scenery our *Villas* boast of. – I have been completely spoiled by travelling through Massachusetts & Connecticut last summer, those mountains, green vallies & winding streams, recur so often to my mind and induce me to regret that I cannot again enjoy the sight of them, however philosophy whispers that I must banish those *agreeables* from memory, and endeavor to *enjoy* an oft repeated tale, and *plod* through it with some degree of interest. – Do think seriously of coming out in the fall and *pitching your tent* with us for the winter, we shall all be so delighted to have you here, you will be quite at home in our attic and *will be permitted to sleep as late as you please*. I really think you might pass next winter pleasantly enough with us, it will be a new scene to you and a *stimulus* to

me, I love to have my energies roused and think I could *pass muster* with my old contemporary and friend by my side – If Aunt Telfair sails from New York do come with her or with the Cummings's you have a penchant for them and perhaps from long intimacy would prefer coming under their auspices. – I send on a Trunk directed to you with materials for Cavallia & Guy which you need not give them to make until the fall or when it is convenient, for if the Trunk arrives here the last of October or first of November it will be time enough. – Enclosed is the key of the trunk which you must open now as we have put some trifling mementos into it for our dear Friends in Park Place. – If Aunt Telfair goes to New York (which is uncertain) Cousin 2 will present with a letter containing sixty dollars to defray my & Margarets commissions. Mrs. Unwin makes her enclosure to her *Cronie* Lady Austen which you will perceive in this letter – Our united love to all, affectionately yours, MT

1. Probably from Walter Scott's Waverley Novels.

20 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 10 NOVEMBER 1822

The first object my thoughts turn to upon my again reaching home is my own dear Mary, and she shall be the first that I write to – often, very often did I think of you and lament your departure after our separation at the steam boat. – I cannot {*illegible*} ever in the pages of memory all that you had registered there, and felt more gratified than *tongue* could express at receiving so distinguished a proof of regard – and never in my lighter, gayer days, was your society as much enjoyed – not even in the woods of Richmond Hill when we were laying plans for when we were wont to meet at Greenwich gate on Saturday evening to talk over my weekly troubles at Miss Dows[1] Indeed Molly years have winged their flight since my heart felt as light, and my time passed as happily as the sweet short week you spent with me in Philadelphia – but why did you not write to me, for I was all anxiety to hear from you. Mr. Patterson (good hearted soul) solicited the privilege of opening your letter *which was of course granted.*

Female curiosity is thought to slumber – of course yours is on the alert to hear something of the wedding. The company was small and select. The Bride was much agitated at first, but her tremors soon subsided into a calm *and I trembled too, as I always do at weddings,* for they are solemn affairs.

Sarah & Harriette behaved extremely well, the former looked like a nun about to assume the fatal viel, the latter wore an air of despondency which as she is seldom animated only a nice observer could have discerned. The Bridal pair left Philadelphia on the 26 and we sailed on the 25. I think Sarah will soon become reconciled to her Mothers Marriage, and I predict it will be the means of her taking a similar step, though I am not seer enough to discover who will be her companion to the holy altar, but I hope it will be a cheerful one, for a mind like hers requires an *uncongenial* one – this is one who assumes the tone of those she is with and I think she will make an excellent *Southern* wife. I spent an evening with the Governeurs after you left me, and a very pleasant one – they are both very pleasing unaffected girls.

Mrs. Livingstone and the lovely Cora[2] took their departure a day before us. I became intimately acquainted with them the last week – & I think Mrs. L. a very brilliant woman, she has a very playful fancy, a great deal of enthusiasm, and a happy talent for description indeed she bewitched us all – the daughter improves upon acquaintance – she is artless, appears to be amicable and her remarks for one so young promise much.

We left *the Judge*[3] at Mrs. Carvers I rather think he was a successful suitor – he gave me a beautiful piece in my album – the value enhanced by its being original – the subject Christianity – the idea borrowed from a sermon of Bishop White[4] but clothed in his own *poetical* language.

Mr. Harmen (Mr. *Shelborn's friend*) & Mr. Collinson lamented in strains more loud the departure of my friend, which lamentation almost *won my heart*, for I like people who know how to appreciate my friends.

What does Fran think of her old admirers change of life – Mama says she first put the notion in his head, and I am certain *he pined in secret* for her – now she might have been my Aunt if she had only encouraged the belle passion in him, oh! how many *jokes* I have for her if only she was beside me.

I have become quite a Philosopher and can never be surprised at any event that occurs {*illegible*} Hymens temple – my mind has arrived at that happy state of *insensibility* for such {*illegible*} will term it, that I console myself by saying with the air & tone of *a Sage* – all things happen for the best we cannot control circumstances, we must only submit to them. What a happy thing for us that the high romantic notions which govern our early

youth gradually give place to more sober and extended views, when we lose in feeling what we gain in reason – when we can look calmly on things which would once have produced almost distraction of mind. I believe no human being indulges as little as I do in anticipated pleasure. I do not look beyond the present – and I cherish nothing that can bring disappointment with it.

Farewell my dearest Mary. I am glad that we met before I left *the dear North Countrie* as it served to cement more strongly that affection for you which time only serves to strengthen. Do write soon and tell me of every trivial thing connected with you for every thing is interesting to me. Remember me affectionately to your Father & Mother Frances and Matilda. Say something kind to Ann Wallace and think often of your absent & affectionate friend. Mary

1. Mistress of the school in New York that Mary Telfair attended. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 19–22.

2. Louise Livingston (ca. 1781–1860) and her daughter Cora (1806–1873) were members of a prominent Duchess County, New York, family whose main residence was Montgomery Place in Annandale-on-Hudson. Cora subsequently married Thomas Pennant Barton (1803–1869).

3. James Moore Wayne (1790–1867), the distinguished Georgia politician, lawyer, and jurist.

4. Bishop William White (1748–1836) was the first Episcopalian Bishop of Pennsylvania.

21 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 20 APRIL [1823][1]

Various circumstances my dear Mary have prevented me from answering your kind and affectionate letter – Our House has been crowded with inmates, who have occupied my time, tho they have not banished you from my mind; every day for the last ten I have determined to write but my good resolutions were formed only to be broken.

I have been *blueish* my dear Mary, but my *blues* have not been created of *unsubstantiated matter*, at present I must deal in mystery at a future period I will tell you the origin of them. This is a strange world and though I am not much of *an actor* in it, yet some of its events amaze me, oh! how I long for (as the Indians say) a *talk* with you, whether it will be this summer I know

not. I am excessively anxious to avail myself of your friendly invitation to the banks of the Hudson – your society alone independant of the sylvan scenes you describe would be a sufficient allurement.

I sometimes think the difficulty we encountered in travelling through the uplands two summers ago will induce my Brother to decide on a Northern trip – he is so considerate and makes so many sacrifices for our happiness that I do not like to draw too largely on his indulgence, I never mind seeing selfish folks put out of the way, but I cannot impose on disinterested ones, so, anxious as I am to visit the North I have never expressed my wishes on the subject – But if the family determine upon going they will sail for Philadelphia – Sarah & myself fearing a second disappointment will if we hear of a friend sailing for New York take shipping for it and after exhausting our tongues with you visit Frances by that time I hope she will be a *Mamma*. I was delighted at the intelligence as I recollect how often she has wished for *a bairn* if the little creatures dropped from the clouds I should be apt to snatch one up but as that is impossible and they are articles too precious to be given or sold I must covet them in vain. I never envied any woman *her Husband* – but I have seen several children that almost made me wish to turn Gipsey that I might steal them. Ann Wallace who delighted in being the first to tell good news apprised Sarah before your letter arrived of Frances's situation, which was a source of rejoicing to us both.

I always told Frances she was *cut out* for a Mother – her love of children, her *matronly* air and figure united to a total indifference to the empty joys of the world admirably fitted her for the nursery, and then observation and experience have qualified her for the difficult task of educating children.

How few mothers seem to feel the responsibility of their situations, particularly when they enter early into married life – the only advantage in a woman marrying late is, that she is sensible of the importance of fulfilling her duties, How can a rational man take a wife without mature deliberation – and yet *reason* and *judgment* slumber in the minds of the most sensible of them when they are about selecting a partner for life.

I am afraid my Brother will never marry – but I hope if he does he will look for *character*. I am shocked sometimes to see how completely women are the creatures of situation and circumstances I feel humbled by it, perhaps it is salutary to me it induces to self examination and curbs that spirit

of pride within me – I have (like you Mary) my misanthropic moods but console myself amidst the dreary gloom, by the light which your friendship throws upon it. It is refreshing to the feelings when depressed by disappointment and vexations to turn to a long cherished friend and say "she has never disappointed me." I can in truth say that Frances & yourself are the only two of my early associates in whom I found congeniality in after life.

You complain of the monotony of life in New York {*illegible*} in Savannah where it is impossible to cull from society the flowers of *wit* and *sentiment* – You would have to take a few steps lower and condescend to be interested in the domestic affairs of your neighbors – but seriously speaking I wish above all things you would come to Georgia – it would be a new world to you – strangers are delighted with it – and you might discover *beauties* in it which have escaped eyes that are always *languishing* for new scenes – need I tell you in whose head those unfortunate eyes are placed – Mr. McAllister senior is extremely ill – not expected to survive many days – indeed there has been a great deal of distress in every way in Savannah this winter – poor Dr. Kollock terminated his earthly career a few weeks ago his loss is sensibly felt in society for he was an excellent man – Farewell the church bell admonishes me that it is time to turn my thoughts to better things. Accept dear Molly a goodly portion of love and distribute some through your household including Fran who by this time might have written to me to tell me the *joyful news* she was *too modest* I suppose to avow the fact – well I must forgive her delinquency on this occasion – as I should similarly situated have done the same – Do not be surprised if you see Sarah & myself this summer but do not expect yours Mary

1. The date is indicated by mention of Dr. Lemuel Kollock's death in 1823.

22 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 3 DECEMBER 1823

We arrived here my dear Mary on the 16 November after a tempestuous and tedious passage. The war of elements (for the wind and waves had a violent contest) caused my spirits to droop sadly, but when we approached nearer to the south and the ocean lulled to rest by *balmy* breezes, my hopes revived, and never was a poor captive released from the imprisonment of years more grateful than I was.

I left Philadelphia with *the deepest regret* – it suits my taste in every respect, and if it rested with me to make choice of residence I would select that place in preference to any other in the whole world. I never had such *a struggle* between duty & inclination for I was *half* disposed to stay but they would have missed me so much at home where (between us) I am a very *important* personage & then I am never happy separated from my own family any length of time. I doubt whether this state of mutual dependence is not productive of more misery than happiness. I am sure being in an unhealthy climate creates great timidity of character & weakens our energies not a little. The deathlike stillness which reigns throughout our streets and the languid air & *silent tongues* of many of its inhabitants afford a striking contrast to the animation & spirit left behind. Do you not find as you march onward through the vale of life a striking change in your opinion of character. I do not like grave people half as much as I used to – gravity of temper unless connected with depth of intellect is wearisome.

How is Ann Wallace? I ought to enquire particularly into *the situation of her heart* as that seemed in a state of agitation not unlike the motion of a wind *Mill* when she was at Mrs. Carvers – ask her if she has been studying *the seasons* and if her motto is still *"Forget me not."* I suppose she gave you a minute account of the wedding from the dress of the bride down to *the dress* of the cake, the same I understand of *the ornaments* for both have spread *far & wide* – people must have something to talk about. I am wearied with the questions put to me about the *looks* and demeanor of the bridegroom – he certainly behaved with great *decorum* if it was any body else I would say *delicacy* – but old prejudices cannot vanish in a moment.

Sarah looked so gay & happy after the *affair* (as Miss Oliver styled it) that I began to think marrying *could not* be such an awful piece of business as our imaginations have painted it. Sarah must have met old Hymen with more hardihood than Frances did from your account of her – for she looked two days after as if she had been married twenty years. Remember that you do not tell one word of this to Ann Wallace.

Before I conclude this subject I must beg you to keep all my opinions & feelings secret – you are the only person I unbudget freely to and things *leak out* that lessen our dignity. I cannot bear that any body should know *my agitations* but she who can best understand them.

Is Frances with you and how is Mr. Chrysties health? I hear their little

boy is quite a beauty give him a kiss for me.[1] I have more than once wished I could have mustered courage to have gone to New York & sailed from there that I might have seen you all again – then I hate parting so much – well, I hope we shall meet again in the interim let us keep up a *brisk* correspondence. Write about yourself and every body I know in the State of New York. Margaret & Alexander leave us next week for the upcountry. We shall be very solitary if I only had you with me I should not deplore their absence so much. I have met with a relation of some of your Sing Sing[2] neighbors – Mrs. Howe is a first cousin of Miss Snowdens she dined with us yesterday & we traced the connection. She is a very sweet woman. The people here are delighted with Mr. Howe he is a very zealous animated preacher extremely pious and gentlemanlike in his manners.[3] Let me hear soon from you and believe me to be yours MT I have opened my letter to say that Sarah has this moment received yours & return thanks for the tongues, apples & cordial

1. William Few Chrystie (1823–1902), the son of Frances and Alfred Chrystie.

2. At this time Sing Sing – now Ossening, New York – was a pleasant rural retreat. The notorious Sing Sing prison was built in 1825.

3. The Reverend S. B. Howe, the incumbent of Savannah's Independent Presbyterian Church, 1823–1827.

23 PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, 18 SEPTEMBER 1824

How cruel in the Fates my dear Mary to have decreed that we should not meet in New York if you had only been a day earlier or me a day later we might have had a confab, for it seems that we never *flag* in the tongue when together. I made several efforts to get to Greenwich but bad weather and *business* interfered. I should not be surprised if no good vessel offers from this port that we return to New York the second week in October. Philadelphia is not as *attractive* to me this fall as it was the two preceding ones; this may proceed from my own stupid feelings, for I have experienced all the *languid indifference* which warm weather always creates in my good for nothing frame, and the heat for the last two days reminds me of *Circassia* (alias) Georgia.

We came in a storm to this place and we have had bad weather almost ever since our arrival. We found our friends all well. Mrs. Cuthbert[1] ushered a little daughter into this world of trouble two days after our arrival. She

made *light work* of it and seemed as *gay* as if nothing *ailed* her. What an astonishing change the *double* state makes in some women. With her it is a new being the *Penseroza* has certainly given place to the cheerful and never have I seen her look half as happy. She talks too of the superior happiness of married life which I think will influence Harriette. The little Cuthbert is "the softened image of its noble sire" and grows apace.[2] *It will furnish a resource against Ennui* and if properly educated prove a future blessing to her. You know I always lay a stress upon *Education* tho you seem to place *Nature* above it.

The La Fayette Mania has not seized me so far as to pay my devoirs to the Hero.[3] I am glad to see the enthusiasm of 76 rekindled and I feel a *tender interest* for his health for I am sure he will be feted to death. Here they mean to *outshine* New York by a general illumination and (what a farce) they are practicing six cream Horses (with sweeping tails) in order to have him drawn in a Coach & six this is aping royalty. How much better it would appear in a Republic to preserve more of republican simplicity, for the greatest display here falls so far short of European splendor.

I dread poor Savannah for the southrons are famous for overdoing matters. Sarah Haig predicts his neck will be broke before he gets there for no *drilling* in this part of the world can make six Horses draw a coach – she mournfully predicts that the tomb of Washington which is prepared for his *inspection* will be for his *reception* – poor old Gentleman. I really think the hard service of the revolution *light* to his present campaign – the excitement is enough to give him a fit – but I sincerely hope he will live through all the efforts that are made to destroy him and that he will return to the lands of his sires to breath his last.

Mrs. Lewis (Gen. La Fayettes aid) I hear looked like a Queen at the Ball. She seems a *Motherly* amiable woman but not calculated for parade. Mrs. Cumming made a false report of me. I was not so charmed with Miss Lewis as she thought for her appearance & manners pleased me – that is her movement for she is graceful, but she wants vivacity – her conversation is too sentimental for my taste she resembles Miss Hart of Boston both in countenance, manners & style of conversation. I believe I should weary of angelic sweetness if unconnected with animation – a human being without it is like a body without a soul – thus are my moral reflections.

I was at a party two nights ago given by Mrs. Dr. Jones[4] – a miscellaneous

or *I stuck to the old* for at those places we seldom meet with conversation except among folks of a *certain age*. The beaux were too juvenile. La Fayette will bring antiquity into vogue.

Miss Juliana Smith is just from France. I have only seen her once. She is more *composed* than the rest of them but *unlovely* in face & form. I think her stiff & awkward but she is called elegant by that connoisseur in the school of fashion Robert Patterson.

Do remember me affectionately to Frances and tell her I will write to her soon. Kiss Willie for me & remember me to Miss Durham. Say something pretty & kind to all – and do try to effect a visit to Georgia this winter to help us to entertain the Marquis. Farewell Molly your friend Mary

1. Sarah Cuthbert.

2. Probably an adaptation of "the softened image of my noble father," Eaten Stannard Barrett, *The Heroine, Or Adventures of Cherubina*, 2d ed. in 3 vols. (London, 1814), 2: Letter XXV.

3. Here Mary Telfair is referring to the American tour undertaken in 1824 and 1825 by the Marquis de Lafayette, during the course of which he visited all twenty-four states.

4. The wife of Dr. George Jones (1766–1838).

24 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 1 MARCH 1825

Your letter my dear Mary was as shining to my eyes as the beams of the sun, after having been long obscured by clouds. I am sensible that I have been very idle as regards my pen this winter, and yet I have thought of you more frequently *(if possible)* than ever, and wished that my eloquence could have brought you here. We have had a great deal of domestic gaiety, that is a great deal of company at home which is the place I enjoy it most and you need not have gone much out to *study character* – our little evening coteries, and dinners, and a grand route (alias) squeeze, would have furnished you with ample materials for *drawing portraits* with a few embellishments from the cabinet of fancy, but you worship at the shrine of *Reason*,[1] and so do I, for I may truly say the illusions of life have all vanished without leaving a wreck behind.

I have not exactly spent a fire side winter for I have been to several large party's and with the exception of one or two enjoyed them. I generally steer clear of the *Insipids* they may be tolerated in morning calls but not

in a *lighted room* for an assemblage without a bon mot or a little badinage does not pass well – there is an animation produced by spirited conversation *aided by a strong cup of tea or coffee* that always transports me a pitch too high, and then comes the hours of *penitence* and *remorse*.

Sarah accompanied Alexander in his upland tour they were absent six weeks. Margaret and myself were *"Housekeepers at home"* do you know I played *Turn key* to admiration and my butter was pronounced excellent, and so were my puddings & cakes. I astonished the folks with my good management – this is to prove to *you* the *versatility of my talents* – but speaking I think active occupation very conducive to happiness – but in order to avoid egotism I must return to Mrs. *Eggs* – she met with a sad accident on her journey the horses ran away with the carriage upset it and she received a terrible cut on her forehead which has left a red gauntlet scar she is compelled to wear a black band over it which gives her a very quizzical look.[2]

Miss Verplanck has not yet arrived in Savannah.[3] I understand she is in Charleston. I shall be very glad to become acquainted with her. I have heard Mary Cumming speak very highly of her – a character capable of musing and interesting will be quite a treat here, where the same faces the same ideas pass & repass year after year without the rainbow test of novelty to illuminate the gloomy scene. I sometimes take my work and pass the morning with Mrs. Le Count my visits seem to afford her pleasure. She is very amiable and very genteel. Catharine Hunter calls her Medora. She is certainly all that poets paint in the eyes of her husband who seems to idolize her.

How does Ann Wallace come on? She has another cousin added to the list in Mrs. Ben Stiles who has gone the round of gaiety and supplanted the *pomp and ceremony* of a wedding with undeviating firmness.[4] I have always thought there are two things that render fortitude more necessary than any other events in life to join a church and to marry faith must support a woman in the first & a strong attachment in the second and yet much I believe depends upon character – people who have not warm feelings can do a great deal from duty.

Mrs. Davis I hear is the happiest of the happy they are building a church for him in Augusta – they pass this summer in the North. Sarah Cummings is now in Savannah she is a charming little girl (for I cannot think of her as

a woman) she is so diminutive – she is very intelligent & unaffected with a great deal of vivacity she is very much excited by conversation and excites others, she will please more generally than Mrs. Davis tho she is more satirical her very countenance inspires me with an inclination to laugh it is so full of drollery.

I am glad to hear Frances intends having *another son* and hope he has made his appearance in the world ere this.

The Nations Guest or as Geo. Cumming styles him the *Nations jest* is to be in Savannah on Monday next every thing and every body is brushing up for La Fayette. I am very luke warm. I saw him in Philadelphia and do not feel that enthusiastic glow of amor patria that some talk so loudly of. I am afraid it is the first step towards a "waveless calm" but not the slumber of the dead."[5]

Give love to all and write soon to your affectionate Mary

1. The phrase "cabinet of fancy" is taken from George Alexander Stephens, *The Songs, & in the Cabinet of Fancy* (London, 1780). The reference to the "shrine of Reason" may be from Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, 3rd ed., 1751, 354.

2. "Mrs. Eggs" was a nickname for her sister Sarah. See the reference to Sarah wearing a bandana in Letter 25.

3. Probably a member of the Verplanck family of Fishkill, New York.

4. Mary Ann Mackay married Benjamin Edward Stiles on 24 January 1825 in Savannah's Independent Presbyterian Church.

5. Thomas Campbell, *The Pleasures of Hope* (London and Edinburgh, 1800), 2.1.

25 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 6 APRIL 1825

My pen has enjoyed "a waveless calm, the slumber of the dead" of late this has not dear Mary arisen from a diminution of regard for you, but a total incapability of being interesting or amusing. Three half finished letters lay on my desk now addressed to you indeed if I was a *miser* I should groan over the sheets of paper wasted in your service, but as I am only an *elegant Economist* I must smile on *the ruin.*

Sarah was the only one who accompanied Alexander to the *celestial* regions – the season was inclement, but she bore the rude pinches of Boreas with becoming philosophy, nothing appalled her until the horses took flight – the cut on her forehead occasioned her much pain at first, but she

suffers no inconvenience from it at present. The scar remains but she covers it with a black bandanna.

You say my letters are *a cordial* to you and I will even believe so it is a besetting sin of mine to wish to interest and be interested in those I love – that makes me very credulous, but we understand each other. Two persons fully to sympathize with each other must be placed in the same situation. I sometimes think sympathy is all that is worth living for. I love to be amused – but amusement is a transient gratification and leaves an aching void behind, but there is a charm in congenial intercourse that soothes the wearied spirit and never palls – but I cannot unbudget to you on paper half as freely as when my tongue is *unhampered* in tete a tete.

I will now answer your questions about Mrs. Davis. Mrs. Ben Howard was at her wedding. She says neither brides man or grooms man officiated – that accords with our notions – Mary Cumming was perfectly self possessed and has since I hear shewed by looks, words & actions that her happiness has been greatly promoted by a change of situation. I hope Ann Wallace intends profiting by her example and advice – she sent me a message by Elizabeth Howard hoping that I would soon follow her example. I told Elizabeth to tell her I will do so if she can provide me with a Mr. Davis. How do you think I would grace a manse? You will probably see Mrs. Davis this summer as she passes it at the North. There is no calculating on events in this life. I never thought she would marry and yet she was the kind of woman that ought to have done so. She has a high sense of duty and warm affections and will prove a treasure to him.

I have a strange sort of feeling I do not like to hear a woman directly after she is married dwell with rapture on the happiness of conjugal felicity – no doubt every woman who marries from affection & is not disappointed in the object must be a great deal happier but let it be a *silent* happiness until time & experience justifies her talking of it *(this is between us)* for love and *marriage* are subjects I talk of only to you – when a woman marries very young I can excuse a great deal but if she has her character formed too much dignity cannot be observed.

Miss Verplanck has been in Savannah nearly a fortnight during that time I have seen her almost every day. The first impression she made on me was not so agreeable, but she grew upon my admiration every moment – there is something about her reminds me of Frances – she has a sweet smile

& pleasing voice her society is delightful – she has a mixture of worldly knowledge and naiveté that is agreeable for its novelty indeed take her altogether she is very charming and I regret that she did not spend a larger portion of her time in Savannah or have visited it during our gay season – she talks very much with every body who has become acquainted with her she is so affable and has so much conversation and those are qualities that give a passport among strangers.

Remember me affectionately to your Father Mother & Matilda. How is Ann Turnbull do remember me to her – sincerely yours Mary

26 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 28 FEBRUARY 1826

As Morpheus refuses to crown me with her drowsy garland my dear Mary, I will seek your society as a substitute for "Sleep which knits the revelled sleeve of care."[1] You have been so often the cause of depriving me of its soothing influence that all your sympathies should be enlisted in my behalf when a *wakeful fit* seizes me.

Behold me in fancys mirror seated in *your favorite nook the chimney corner* toasting my toes and scribbling, while Margaret is adjusting her night cap, and Madame Utilitie in an adjoining apartment laying plans I suppose for future usefulness. What an enviable being she is to pursue the quiet tenor of her day so *philosophically*, seldom sad and never gay, and yet when the club meet we elicit occasionally a brilliant sally from her. I despair of our ever reaching the same state of *equanimity* tho it is my constant aim to do so, Nature made me of more volatile materials therefore my task is a difficult one. I have to climb hills, and *approach precipices,* while others tread the smooth and level lawn.

How often do I wish for you in my gayer as well as graver hours – you are so indulgent when I am in the former, and so full of sympathy when in the latter, that in vain I seek for some one here to fill your place one amuses me for a little while, another shews kindness & affection but I have no friend out of my own family in whom I have full confidence – there are a hundred *little* feelings that we can communicate to one who *understands* us that we ought sedulously to conceal from those who *misunderstand.* It is my *misfortune* to unite a social spirit with *a strong sense of my own dignity* – those opponents will create warfare sometimes.

I have not seen a new face this winter and you know I have your Mam-

mas besetting sin *a distaste* for old ones. I did *luxuriate* a little in Ann Clay's society from which I culled the sweets of social converse – she is a charming union of dignity, grace, intelligence & vivacity.

We agreed last summer that conversation dissipates the mind at one period of life, as much as balls & party's do at another, of this *you* & *I* are sad examples. It is too true that what interests and dazzles us most powerfully in life is the cause of alluring us from sober duties, and what improves the intellect & gives a play to the social affections contributes neither to happiness, or usefulness but as a French Woman remarked when she lavished her affects on a bird *"one must love something."* It is better to recreate the mind with trifles than to allow it to become "a leafless desert" a "waste of feeling unemployed."[2] Since I have reflected on the mysterious workings of Providence I have become more dependent on His will and as a principle of duty reconcile as much as possible the changes of life – I have learned to be grateful for little blessings as well as great ones and to sigh for nothing beyond my attainment. I have had my full share of sorrows and disappointments they have weaned me from the world but they have not made me what I wish to be – a pious character.

Mrs. Cumming and myself talk of you whenever we meet you have made quite as deep an impression on her as I did on Mrs. Skinner who remained only two days in Savannah. I am glad to hear she is so devoted to the interests of her children for to me it seems natural that a mother should forget herself in her offspring – some have an *animal* attachment to their bodies, keep them clean & caress them without seeming to remember they are immortal beings, and susceptible of every improvement which education can bestow – others allow them *(the Housekeepers at home particularly)* to wallow like pigs in dirt, and to grow up like the tree of the forest, without culture or pruning. Observers on the Theatre of life, who have had full time for *study* without a great deal of occupation understand better how to train children than those who early undertake maternal cares & duties. Becky Smith made a very sagacious remark to me upon our first acquaintance – she says she never saw a child that required whipping, but she had seen a great many mothers who did – this is in opposition to Dr. Johnsons system he was I am sorry to say too great a friend to the rod.[3]

I have just finished Sheridans life – poor Sherry! I love him with all his faults the romance of his life & character awaken the deepest interest – the

best traits of his character are delightful and recalled some to my mind who like him seemed destined to delight & interest.[4] I was foolish enough to weep at several pages. What a finished creature she was the very wife for a man of genius & feeling.[5] She had as Moore justly observed intellect to appreciate his talents, and sensibility to enjoy his success.

Uncle spent last evening with us and exhibited his *talent*, for amusement, he told several *new* stories with many embellishments from his own fancy which you know is a *rich store of humor* – and by way of finale wound up the farce with mimicry. Uncle would be a much greater favorite of mine if he had a *gentle dash of sentiment* just enough to soften his satire, with more refinement, but he is an *amicable original*, and it is impossible not to like him though you know I have said he will never make a conquest. Most women adore dignity I confess it has a powerful charm (to me) when combined with suavity of manner.

Have you seen *"Cousin Alfred"*? Ann no doubt endeavored to afford you a peep at *your mentor* of other times. I wonder if he thinks you view him as *a rival* still, or perhaps he thinks the *ambitious spirit* which shone so conspicuously in your early day has been shorn of its *resplendent* beams and you must be satisfied with being *a meek and humble woman*. I saw him but once and then he *stared* so unmercifully that I almost lost my *self balance* – keep all this from Ann Wallace. Ann Clay seems to have the same dread in that quarter as I have. Mrs. McAllister has another son a sweet little thing – she is a *continued* beauty. I never saw her look so lovely – her pale face, and full soft eye gives a touch of the Madonna to a face not always interesting to me. Some countenances are improved by animation, she looks best when least excited. Ben Stiles I hear has a very fine son. This has been a wonderful harvest for *human* crops. Love to all, did Frances receive my letter before she left you? Yours sincerely, MT

1. *Macbeth*, 2.3.

2. Lord Byron, *The Giaour, a fragment of a Turkish Tale* (London, 1813), line 957.

3. Samuel Johnson, *An Essay on Education: A poem, in two parts* (Shrewsbury, England, 1771). Or Mary Telfair may have read *The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D, New edition with an essay on his life and genius by Arthur Murphy* (London, 1823).

4. Thomas Moore, *Memoirs of the life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (London, 1825).

5. Sheridan's wife was Elizabeth Linley (1754–1792), whom he married in 1773.

27 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 22 NOVEMBER 1826

I have been a shameful delinquent of late dear Mary in the line of my duty towards you; but when you have listened patiently to a recital of my motives for not writing to you, you will readily excuse my silence! First then I was taken ill two days after I received your last communication and had as complete a *seasoning* as if I had been newly imported from England with lilies and roses upon my cheeks. The fever left me so weak and spiritless that I have conceived quite an aversion to either talking or writing since. I had entirely recovered before I left Wilkes but the weather was warm when we first arrived and owing to sitting in church the first day that a cool change occurred I took a cold which produced the rash fever. As soon as I recovered from it, I was induced to spend an evening with Catharine Hunter. You will be surprised to hear that the excitement of talking, laughing and lights, after spending four months in total solitude so completely shook my nerves that it produced a headache and fever – and now that I have discovered the extent of my *weakness*, I am determined to avoid mental stimulus until my system recovers its usual strength, and now though a fit subject for bed I am determined to throw a lethean spell over my aches and pains, by *chatting* a while with you.

I have become quite an advocate for country life. It is so independent a one. It affords a better field for the improvement of time, and our reflections in the country have a better influence on the feelings than when in the hurry and bustle of a town, with much to distract and dissipate the mind, and little to interest it.

How I wish you had accompanied Mrs. Habersham out, we might have *luxuriated* together this winter. Mrs. H. is wonderfully improved in *energy* as well as looks, and I am happy to inform you that she has discovered bloom upon her cheek since her return to the south, this happy discovery precludes the necessity of her adopting my advice and using *rouge and pearl powder* to regain his lost affections.

The little Sing Singer paid us a visit a few days ago, and says much in favor of the clime. Margarets tongue is running on at such a *furious* rate that I scarcely know what I write she is relating some of *Uncle's new anecdotes*. Miss Eustaphe it seems is the Heroine. The scene of his tales – Saratoga. The young Miller supped with us a few nights ago – he spoke with a great deal of gratitude of the kind attentions of your family – *you* for once have cut Matilda out with a young beau – he speaks in raptures of

Miss Mary Few. It has been the province of Matilda always to capture the *young*.

Mrs. M has come out quite renovated and sometimes recalls what she was. I wish some amiable widower with a few bairns would elect her his spouse – she seems to feel the loneliness of her situation so much. Mrs. Johnson deserves well of her country for producing twins a second time they lived only a day owing to their birth being premature. Sarah Cecil is in great affliction for the loss of her mother. Report says that your favorite C. Hunter will smile upon Mr. Williams – a very excellent man but not distinguished. He is the father of four promising children and the sort of character that one who enlists under the banner of reason might be very happy with. She is not *in love* and I fear it will cost her a few struggles to make up her mind – still my knowledge of her character induces me to think she would be happier united to him than remaining as she is – very few women can grow old *single* without being soured by modifications and disappointments attendant on the state of *a solitaire*. It seems the part of *wisdom* to bear them with philosophy – tho feeling when not properly regulated proves a rebel on the occasion.

How does Frances and her nursery progress? The latter is transferred I presume to your second story until the Hudson is sealed up in ice. I am sorry to send you so short a letter but I shall write again soon. Two barrels of apples found their way for which we thank your Papa. They are delightful. I will send you a specimen of some jelly made from them equal to *Guava*. Love to all. Yours MT

28 WILKES COUNTY, GEORGIA, 25 [?] [? 1826][1]

Your letter dear Mary was received this morning and proved a rich repast to our *famished* mentals – We *languish* as much here for the want of stimulus as you did in *Greenwich Village* which in our early days was a sort of *Paradise*. If we could be transformed by some fairy wand into {*illegible*} neither of us would now *pant* and *flutter* for admittance there. Taste like every quality of the human mind is liable to change and what appears *great* to *little eyes* after a few brief years have passed away seems very insignificant. – I sometimes say to myself – can any object in nature appear grand to me after viewing Niagara? indeed the contrast between my tour last summer and this is as great as the imagination can conceive – A

march through the deserts of Arabia can alone compare with it in solitude and dearth of interest – The roads are so infamous that our necks are in jeopardy every six miles – Our *cattle* (for such is the appellation bestowed by these *Highlanders* upon that noble animal the Horse) twice staggered and fell ascending a high hill full of "chasms" far deeper than those which we detected in my friend *Sally Thomas* – My conscience smote me violently when Sarah informed me in what an *affectionate* manner she enquired after her *fellow sufferers* on Lake Ontario – but it was too late to *smooth the surface* after the *defile was cut.* – We have had neither a *Boot* or *spur* to laugh at this summer – no Cleveland to *protect* us, and no *Palmer* to offer *"alms"* and no Mary Few to reject them – You were certainly the Pilgrims *favorite Saint* (*Octave* not excepted) I am inclined to think *your reputation* won his admiration, for I do not think he had *taste* enough to admire your physiognomy or talent to appreciate your mind. Catharine Hunter often amuses herself with recurring to the *bone I picked with him* – and the Cloak he was willing to *share* with us. – How unlike the gallant Raleigh who made his a Carpet for his Queen to walk upon.

We passed through Sparta and passed the day with Mrs. Terrill Mrs. Skinners friend – I was sorry to hear *our friend* Mrs. S was indisposed – I had not the felicity of listening to the *dulcet* tones of her voice – not even "Yes Mum" pierced "the *fearful* hollow of mine ear."[2] – She was at her *Mammas Villa* six miles from the village – I hope she will find a better model for *Jane* than poor I "with all my imperfections thick upon my head."[3] – Depend upon it that Janes remaining at school without her, will prove a blessing to both – The Children in this part of the world are so *dragged* up, and neglected, that it is a mercy when they are cast upon strangers for instruction – I'm told her only reproof to her youngest is "Julia Frances will you make Mother cry" – "you don't love Mother"! What *imbecillity* – equal to the blind indulgence displayed by the sweet Psalmist of Israel towards his sons. – I have come to this conclusion that not one woman in two hundred feel the responsibility of their situation. Here they do not even keep their bodies sweet and clean – *to glut the appetite* is all they do – I have been accustomed in the *lowlands* to see the intellect neglected, but the persons and morals attended to. – I have been playing *schoolmistress* for the last three weeks during the childrens vacation – Mary is Margarets pupil, and little Margaret mine. At first we thought it a hopeless undertaking, for

though naturally good children, their tempers have been made irritable by excessive indulgence – and their Mother is perfectly blind to their defects – indeed she allows them to do exactly as they please (this is entre nous) to *drill* them into order was for the first two days a difficult task, never being accustomed to study a lesson or look into a book at home – we found them a little refractory but Patience and Perseverance will in the end triumph. – I may well exclaim in the words of my favourite Author "Oh! indolence and indecision of mind! if not vices in yourselves, to how much exquisite misery do you frequently prepare the way!"[4] – My pupil has materials, which, with culture may be formed into something superior, she has a quickness of mind rarely met with in a child of ten years of age – she has imagination without much sensibility – easy to acquire but difficult to retain a mind full of vivacity and association and delights in the ludicrous. I am dreadfully afraid of encouraging that propensity. Some of her remarks are very shrewd we reward them when they are obedient by playing games in the evening calculated to awaken their intellectual prowess. I agree with Mrs. Barbould in thinking Enigmas's benefit the mind as much as wrestling and running do – the body of both are a play that prepares the mind and body for serious labour.[5] I have been so fortunate as to win the affections of my pupil completely – she is very anxious to be *christened over again* that I might be her *Godmother* and begs me to *adopt* her. – It is a singular whim, but shews that the little thing has warm feelings – I am afraid application can never be infused into her, and with all her attractions she will have a great many faults – the weeds have kept place with the flowers. However Mrs. Telfair has determined to send them both down this winter, she sees the unwearied pains taken with them & I am in hopes will become so sensible of the importance of a good education that she will allow Mary to go on to the north to school next summer. We feel the delicacy of our situation and cannot *urge* what we wish. Oh! how important it is for people connected by the ties of Nature or marriage to be congenial – nothing can atone for the want of it – neither of the children resemble any of us in appearance Mary is exceedingly like the Longs – Margaret resembles her Mother – but unites to her delicacy of appearance (for she is a mere shadow) a vast deal of animation – she listens with intense interest – and talks with enthusiasm.

How admirably have you drawn the character of Mrs. Martin – she is one that I like very much as a drawing-room companion – she *has taste* and

has been well educated but if she wants *heart* and simplicity of manners as well as character – Did you see Sarah Grimes at Sing Sing? – I understand she has fixed the wandering heart of the Laird of Coleraine – Mr. Potter, who you have seen.[6] There is some romance in the history of their love, and if I had the talent of a Walter Scott or a Washington Irving I might weave it into a romantic tale – without any of the *pathetic touches*, which distinguish "The Bride of Lammermore" or "The Broken Heart".[7] Miss Grimes was crowned Queen of May on his domains last spring – I was in hopes he would that day have said "The fields, the Master all my fair are thine."[8] – The situation of *this Lavinia* – young, lovely, and unprotected, with no guide but a ridiculous inconsistent Mother who delights in decking her out like a Princess, without scarcely *a cent* to justify the extravagance. – It seems a providential occurrence that Potter a *gentleman* of fortune and character should be disinterested enough to marry her – for she is a girl without mind – and I think insipid – Her appearance will interest as long as she is pretty and young – but there is nothing for middle age – a mere *spring flower* – which summer will wither, and autumn blast – are you not sometimes benevolent enough to rejoice at hearing of such a match and yet not wonder at the choice – Mr. P though an *untalented* man and a dull companion, might have aspired higher and I am surprised after, his first choice, Cornelia Reid He did not look for some one more *distinguished* – a man who lives in the country without society should have an entertaining wife – particularly if he has not the art of entertaining himself.

I am sorry dear Mary I cannot *lure* you to our temperate clime – I perceive that I am not to see you until next summer – I must form some *plan* for our amusement this winter to keep my mind *in play* – you have never seen Boston – our next trip together must be there – it will all *be new to you* I was in hopes that we should take a short trip to Charleston together in the winter but you cannot *mountain like* be removed. – Sarah Cuthbert has gone to her home in Jasper County, with her spouse – Mrs. Davis has by this time a son or daughter – We leave this in a week, and expect to be in Savannah the last of October – direct your next letter to Savannah – love to all – sincerely yours MT

1. Mary Telfair's reference to the age of her niece Margaret Long Telfair, who was born on 24 June 1816, suggests that this letter was written sometime in 1826.

2. *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.5.

3. *Hamlet*, 1.5, although the original does not include the word "thick."

4. Walter Scott, *Waverley*, chapter XLV.

5. The English author Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld (1743–1825).

6. James Potter (1793–1863) was a wealthy planter. Sarah Jones Grimes was the daughter of Dr. John Grimes and his wife Catharine Jones Glenn.

7. This may refer to John Ford's play *The Broken Heart: A Tragedy* (1633), but in the context seems more likely to be Mrs. Gore, *Richelieu, or, The Broken Heart, an Historical Tale* (London, 1826).

8. James Thomson, *The Beautiful Episode of Palemon & Lavinia, from the Seasons* (Glasgow, 1798).

29 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 7 JANUARY 1827

I have seated myself down dear Mary with a determination of having a long *gossip* with you and answering your kind letter which I received about an hour ago. We certainly think alike on most subjects and are actually going through the same course of reading for I have been reading Childrens books for the last three months with an intensity of interest which surprises me, and in that respect entered into a state of *second childhood*. The valuable morals which those books contain are as great advantage to old heads as young ones. We were all properly delighted with the "Lady of the Manor." I never in my days of romance poured with greater delight over a novel of Miss Burneys than I did over this excellent production of Miss Sherwoods.[1] The stories are beautiful. I scarcely know which drew most upon my sympathies Louisa Harley, or Lydia Howard. In the character of the former I traced a more congenial spirit, but the latter seemed more like an angel than a woman. Every tale contains a moral from which we derive a vast deal of instruction. Little Margaret[2] (who is full of faults) was so struck when I read the history of poor Constantia to her, that she conceived an aversion to hearing it – the parallel was too great between the spoiled child & herself – how many miseries are created by the injudicious indulgence of parents! There are some whom nature casts in so gentle a mould that they resist the evil influence of bad example and neglect but how limited the number? Have you among your *story* books Mrs. Woodlands Tales,[3] let me my dear *child* recommend them to you. "The fatal effects of indolence" ought to be not only read, but *studied* by every mother.[4] I know one

or two that might have *set* for the character of Agatha – Josephine or the advantages of a summer is a delightful little story, very much in the style of "Display" which we both agree in thinking a most interesting little work.

I am going over my early education with my little protégé. I find myself much informed in *Geography and Grammar* for their teacher gives them tremendous lessons. Poor Mary from possessing a slow mind, finds committing to memory an herculean labor, while Margaret acquires her lessons with astonishing ease. I am quite satisfied with her mind, but she is careless, volatile, and indolent. The independence of her nature revolts at discipline – in fact she is the most singular child I have ever known and will unless *properly drilled* turn out *a mere woman of the world*. She has a great deal of Sarah Haigs drollery, and is often witty, but never encourage her propensity for satire she will never have prudence to balance it – and so few people can tolerate that talent in others which renders them ridiculous. Ridicule is more difficult to bear than *abuse*. The most satirical woman I know is CH[5] and yet her society is so amusing that I am willing to forgive all her sins. The lords of creation fear her very much; however they admire generally passive minds in womankind.

Last night *"the rich Mr. Potter"* led Miss Grimes to the altar.[6] It was an inauspicious day, it stormed violently and Sol did not smile upon them for a moment. I have seen no one who was at the wedding, but presume it was a splendid affair – the bride glittering in topaz and smiling without meaning – the bride groom displaying the poetry of *motion* for he understands all those graceful evolutions which distinguishes the man of fashion and yet (entre nous) I always feel inclined to yawn when he talks to me. Next to George Glen he is the greatest *anodyne* I have ever encountered – so much for *"the best match in Georgia"* and yet he is a *superexcellent* match for Sarah Grimes.[7] But stupid men are often *the best matches*. I think every match a good one when there is congeniality that one word comprises every thing. "Jane Skinner" presented me with your valued gift – only the day before her arrival Mr. How recommended it to me. I allowed Alexander the perusal first – he is delighted with it, as soon as he finishes it I shall commence it. Sarah desires thanks to Matilda for the beautiful pen knife she sent her & says there is no danger of its *cutting love*.

I received a letter from Frances a day or two ago it was *a treat* after so long allowing her pen to slumber to hear from her – she must be completely

absorbed in her children. I heard Willies beauty very much eulogised by a lady who met him in a steam boat last summer. Did you not meet Dr. Scriven in Paris? He plighted his faith to Miss Bryan a few days ago and they are now setting up for company.[8] What an odious practice!

It is lucky I have never been a bride or I should have trampled on all bridal laws – *married* without *spectators* and *disappointed to gourmands of their cake*. I verily believe if some women married Methuselah's they would have brides maids and cover their *night caps* with a veil – and attend to all the etceteras of the business.

I have not seen the Habershams for some time but will mention to Mrs. H what you requested. Mr. H's *domestic fits* promises to continue for in sober earnest he reads to her every night and I live in hope of seeing them soon a pattern for husband & wife. Mrs. Hazard is on a visit to Beaufort, she seems to have enjoyed herself last summer in a quiet way. I do not think her a domestic character. I believe you considered her a girl of some talent – her manner & countenance does not indicate it. Mrs. Montgomery is still invisible.[9] Life must be a waste of wearisome hours to her. I think there is nothing in this world can compensate a widow for the loss of her only child. It is the deepest affliction that can befall a human being. I must bid you good night my dear Mary for my feet are cold and I must pay a debt to Morpheus. I owe him double homage as I got no sleep last night. My health is better now than it ever has been so much for the cold winter we have had yours sincerely Mary A happy new year to all my friends in Park Place.

1. Mary Martha Sherwood (1775–1851) was author of *The Lady of the Manor: Being a Series of Conversations on the Subject of Confirmation. Intended for the Use of the Middle and Higher Ranks of Young Females*. There are several early editions of this work, including one published in Baltimore in 1820. Miss Burney is the author Fanny Burney (1752–1840).

2. A reference to her niece, Margaret Long Telfair.

3. M. Woodland, *Tales for Mothers and Daughters, in four volumes* (London, 1807).

4. "A Tale of Warning, or, The Victims of Indolence" is in volume 1 of Woodland's book.

5. Catharine Hunter.

6. The wedding took place in Savannah's Independent Presbyterian Church on 4 January 1827.

7. George Glen was Margaret Hunter's brother. Chatham County, Georgia, Unpublished Will Books, G, 3.

8. Dr. James P. Screven [sometimes spelled Scriven] and Georgia H. Bryan were married in Savannah's Episcopalian Church on 28 December 1826, by the Reverend A. Carter.

9. Probably a daughter-in-law of John and Maria Nicholson Montgomery.

30 NEW YORK, 4 JULY 1827

We arrived in New York my dear Mary the day before yesterday after a long passage of ten days & a very delightful one, with the exception of two stormy days & stormy nights – The sea air was quite inspiring and I do not know when I have felt so buoyant but what weather for a northern clime? We left refreshing breezes in Georgia for we had not one *genuinely* hot day previous to our departure. We are in the third story of Mrs. Southards snuffing up all the air we can. We wished to have gone to Bordentown to see my Cousins but the heat of traveling there & back again & the uncertainty of procuring lodgings induces us to defer it until our return to New York – We shall not go to the Springs until we establish Mary at Boarding school[1] – Alexander wishes to consult your Mamma respecting the different schools – which she would recommend – answer this immediately & let us know – I long very much to see you if I can conveniently take a trip to Sing Sing before we leave this for the Springs I will do so. – My Brother goes immediately to Bordentown for a day or two – I passed your town mansion last evening & gave it a longing lingering look in remembrance of past enjoyment.

You will receive a Barrell of Hams & one of Rice – My Brother will put them on board of the Sing Sing sloop tomorrow.

I am so hot & stupid my dear Molly that I can say nothing more at present – while I am writing Sarah Cecil & Margaret are engaged in a *violent* debate – I believe the former thinks we are *too northern* in our taste & habits – she thinks Georgia a Paradise – Louisa McAllister informed me you looked ill – now summon your *philosophy* and go with us to the Springs – We join Dr. & Mrs. C there, Mrs. McAllister who is *very sweet* goes in company with us & I really think if we can make the circuit to Boston you will enjoy yourself as much as you did in Canada – At all events if we go that way you might meet us in Albany – as a further inducement *Uncles jokes* I am becoming too grave to enjoy them – but he has some *new* stories that may make you laugh tho they are *old* to me – Our quondam friend *Pat* flew on the wings of friendship to see us as soon as we arrived – he is as *young* as ever – the same good hearted, heartless creature – he

cracked a dozen jokes in half an hour – every *haut ton* ought to have a few such pillars to support it.

While the good folkes are gazing at the military display I am occupied in scribbling to thee *Sights & sounds* have lost most of their attraction and alas! I fear in the decline of life I shall have very little to interest me – "the leafless desert"[2] will appear notwithstanding our desire to nourish the Evergreen – Accept love from all & present it to yours – yours sincerely MT

1. Her niece Mary Eliza Telfair.

2. Byron, *Giaour*, line 957.

31 LEBANON SPRINGS, NEW YORK, 9 AUGUST 1827

Your letter my dear Mary reached me only a day or two previous to our departure from Saratoga where we passed three weeks delightfully and arrived here last evening. It is ten years since we last visited this spot and so great have been the improvements that if I had been put down here without being told where I was I certainly should not have recognised it to be sweet Lebanon, for though the wilderness does not exactly blossom on the rose houses have been erected in every direction and where now a garden smiles was once a wood. The country is lovely and may compare with Fishkill although no lordly Hudson rolls its tides along. Quebec or rather its surrounding scenery bears a striking resemblance to this *paradisical* spot.

We have just returned from the Shaker village where we made a few purchases and went through their dairy and feasted on their nice bread & butter and cheese.[1] They are the neatest people I have ever seen. I wish the *"Housekeepers at home"* could take a few lessons of them however they are so *conceited* & incorrigible in their habits, and I doubt whether quaker neatness could produce a *burst of admiration.*

Frances's neighbor Mrs. De Wint is here she introduced herself to us last evening. I *pumped* her *dry* about you all – she informed me that Matilda was expected here one day this week. I shall watch every Post Coach that comes up the hill and will feel a little provoked if she arrives here after we leave it.

I saw a son of Judge Nicholsons & his wife at Saratoga as soon as we heard who they were we made up to them. They were several days in the house without forming an acquaintance. They are a nice genteel looking

pair. I always feel as if your kindred however remote are acquaintances of mine – a *mysterious* chain seems to *link* me to them. My stay in Albany did not admit of my going to see your aunt[2] – which I regretted as I have an old fashioned regard for her. I wish I could ascertain whether you will all be at Sing Sing in the course of ten days for our party wish to locate in some rural spot a little while and would prefer Sing Sing provided you were there. Our folks prefer the village auberge to the mineral spring establishment. When Matilda comes for *come she must* I shall then know all about you. I really wish the spirit of roving had seized you that we might have met here. Crittendons establishment teemed with associations. You recollect the night previous to our departure for Canada and the jokes that flew about the long room.

The society here generally does not look exactly comme il faut. Mrs. Lowndes Brown is here and seems to be a sweet unaffected woman and quite intelligent.[3] There is a Mrs. Livingston and Miss McIvars of Philadelphia – very agreeable people. There is no one else that strikes my fancy. I will borrow the words of Pope & say the rest are "best distinguished by black, brown & fair."[4]

This travelling through a fine country has a most desiccating effect upon the mind – I have neglected my needle entirely – my book partially – I have made out to read Hope Leslie and like it much. Hope is so natural and magawisca a noble creature.[5] Miss Sedgwick was at the springs I merely saw her – also Mrs. Ledyard who {*illegible*} to renew my acquaintance with, but she {*illegible*} look of recognition and I was afraid she might not recollect ever having seen such a being as myself though she made a lasting impression on me.

As my brain is rather barren at present dear Mary I will not spin out this letter for fear you will think me a tedious *Spinster* therefore I will clip the thread of my discourse with the *shears* of love – present then my affectionate regards in which all unite to your family circle with the hope of seeing you I remain your affectionate Mary. S. Cecil desires her love to you.

1. In 1776, under the leadership of Mother Ann Lee, the Shakers, or the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, established a settlement in the township of Watervliet, near Albany, New York. In 1787, following a spiritual revival in the nearby town of New Lebanon, they formed the New Lebanon Society.

2. This may be a reference to Hannah Nicholson Gallatin, the wife of Albert Gallatin and aunt to Mary Few.

3. Margaret Lowndes Brown, of Barrytown, New York.

4. Alexander Pope, *Epistles to Several Persons*, Epistle II: "To a Lady on the Character of a Woman," line 4.

5. Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie, or early times in the Massachusetts* (London, 1828). Magawisca is a character in *Hope Leslie*.

32 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 14 OCTOBER 1827

The affectionate interest dear Mary you have always expressed concerning one ever grateful for every proof of regard is a strong inducement to write immediately upon returning to our melancholy home. Our voyage was a disastrous one – like the voyage of life it was a succession of horrors & calms, of hopes & fears. I was patient under it all and excused the eagerness testified by some for a speedy passage – I felt as if all that I most valued on earth surrounded me and that I had left those next in value behind. I believe the fewer ties we have the stronger our affections are. My admiration I can scatter with a lavish bounty over Natures wide domains but *my love* I can give to very few.

I cannot tell you how much I missed your society and how often the hours you passed with me at Mrs. Southards recurred to my ever busy memory. My little library selected by your taste was the solace of many an hour and furnished a source of amusement to others. Dunallan beguiled the two days we lay at Staten Island indeed it inspired the deepest interest.[1] The author has clothed religion in its loveliest garb – with Dunallen it was *a principle* not an impulse and I think its progress on the mind of Catharine together with its influence upon her character is deeply interesting. I think if you had a *little more energy* under a Dunallon you might have made a second Catharine. I do not know any one else *practically* good enough to come near her mark.

I was pleased with "Retrospection."[2] It seems to have been written for the benefit of single women. Their cares are so much lighter than those of married women that they have more time to brood over ideal misery. Miss Taylor is correct when she asserts that intellectual resources are essential to unmarried women – next to religion nothing seems to me so important in life to them as that cultivation which strengthens the mind and places it above those petty feelings which are so much indulged in by the igno-

rant. I have made considerable progress in the life of Henry Martin what a delightful vision he presents of ardent piety and a cultivated intellect – his humility was unparalleled he seemed to have been richly imbued with the spirit of the Martyrs of old. Next to Cowper & Miss Jane Taylor[3] he commands my warmest sympathy and yet though third in my affections he deserves to be first.

This has been a very fateful season in this place and those lives that have been sacrificed were valuable indeed – the heads of families, Mr. Carter the Episcopal minister & his wife died within three days of each other – both in the prime of life and the parents of three helpless little children.[4] What an awful & mysterious dispensation of Providence! How wonderfully mysterious to us short sighted mortals. They were both resigned and willingly exchanged this world for a better. Mrs. Lovell also the mother of a young and helpless family took Mrs. Carters infant to nurse and two or three days after fell a victim to yellow fever. I cannot express to you my horror upon learning this melancholy recital.

The weather was and still is exceeding warm – seeing several of our friends – meeting the servants who seemed to feel so much {*illegible*} in me such a state of nervous irritability that I could not sleep for several nights and still feel very wretched. Alexander forbids our using any exertion for fear of producing fatigue. If we could occupy ourselves actively we would feel better but I think the more quiet we keep the better for our bodies.

I will not apologise dear Mary for sending you so gloomy a letter for I feel that it will be a long time before I can write you a cheerful one. Our love to all your dear family. I hope Colonel Few is well again let us know very particularly how he is when you write. Tell Mary Telfair that I will write to her when I feel settled and that I hope she will bear in mind all the good advice we gave her.[5] You will hear from me again in a few days by the Henry the sloop we came in. With the hope of hearing from you dear Mary I subscribe myself your ever affectionate friend Mary

1. Grace Kennedy, *Dunallan, or, Know What You Judge* (Boston, 1827).

2. Mrs. Ann Martin Taylor, *Retrospection: A Tale,* 3rd ed. (London, 1823).

3. Jane Taylor (1783–1824) co-authored *City Scenes, or, A Peep into London: For Good Children* (Philadelphia, 1809).

4. The Reverend Abiel Carter, a native of New Hampshire, became the incumbent of

Christ Episcopal Church, Savannah, in 1821. He and his wife, Mariah, who was born in New Jersey, were both thirty-six years old at the time of their death. They were victims of the yellow fever epidemic that struck Savannah in the fall of 1827. *Register of Deaths in Savannah*, 4:212.

5. A reference to her niece, Mary Eliza Telfair.

33 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 25 JANUARY 1828

Your last letter dear Mary has remained unusually long without a reply this you must attribute to the want of subjects, as well as my own insensibility of furnishing you with original ideas. The secluded life we led this winter I found both favorable to meditation and reading. There is some thing in the tranquillity of home that enables me to discipline my mind better than when on my summer sojourn.

Margaret and myself have been keeping house for the last five weeks entirely alone. We occupy our days with needle work & reading and one or two of our friends step in every evening to cheer us – so that we are not allowed to feel the vacuum occasioned by the lack of Alexander & Sarah whom we are in daily expectation of seeing.

Sarah's last letter was filled with an adventure she had – traveled through a dismal swamp on horse back – crossed a river in a frail *barque* and had been gracing a hovel with true dignity. However all these *horrors* were exchanged for the elegant and hospitable abode of Mr. Urkhart who is something like Mr. William Wallace in character – he is eminently pious, very literary, and a devoted admirer of the Arts – how delightful it is to find religion blended with general information and a refined taste, it seems all that we can require in this world and makes people *too interesting*. Sarah says their manner of living reminds her of some *Lord & Lady of a Manor* – while he was discussing the beauties of sculpture, poetry, and painting she was giving a score of *recipes*. I never knew Sarah pour forth so much enthusiasm before – this remarkable pair seem to have bewitched her – even the melody of the sable tribe as they *chanted* after the evening service was portrayed in glowing colours. I think it would *do me good* to spend a week or two with such people. I have as great a desire to know Mr. Urkhart as Ann Clay has to make a pilgrimage to Rhinebeck to hear Mrs. Garrettson talk.

You disturbed my slumbers a few nights ago. I had a singular dream about you which I will not relate. The Ancients I fear would not have in-

terpreted it favorably. The moderns are too enlightened to attach importance to dreams. To me they seem a sort of link which connects us with the invisible world; for it is only in our dreams we can hold communion with departed friends.

I was happy to learn from your last letter dear Mary that you have chosen the better part and united yourself to the church. I wish I was worthy of following your example but though my most ardent desire is to become an exemplary Christian, I feel that I have made very little progress towards it. Our church is still without a Pastor. Mr. Russell was called and declined accepting it which I am glad of, for I do not think from his letter he can be a man of any delicacy. I fear from the *calculating* spirit breathed throughout every sentence that he is a kindred spirit to the *lover* of our *illustrious House*. I hope the failure of crops in the interior will be productive of a renewed *shower* of *Billet doux*. The *pelting* of the last *pitiless* storm was enough to provoke all the *ire* our *gentle* natures are capable of. This is a secret and you must *husband* it.

George Cumming walked home with us from church last night – he has been seriously impressed for two years and made a public profession last communion Sunday. I never knew a character so much softened by religion – he is cheerful but has ceased to indulge in that spirit of ridicule that formerly distinguished him – he is in consequence more interesting – for it is unamiable to lower people by ridiculing their little peculiarities.

We have a most eloquent man at present preaching for us but his health is too feeble to admit his remaining. I have never heard any one who had the power of riveting my attention so closely – he has zeal, feeling, talent, taste & imagination – in fact his mind seems cast in a superior mould. I think if he could remain with us he would prove as great an acquisition to the place as Mr. Kollock was, but our climate is an insurmountable objection with men who have families and it does seem cruel to bring healthy blooming children to a southern climate to pine away & perhaps fall victims to disease.

What does Ann Wallace think of her Uncle Stiles's dereliction from common sense. He is in a few days to become a married man. His choice a young silly girl who I suppose is dazzled with his *filthy* lucre, for I can think nothing *clean* attached to him. We have often discoursed upon the *insanity* of widowers but this exceeds all that has ever occurred in the annals of foolish

matches. I understand he is *a devoted love* a man who for forty years has never left his own domicile except to walk over his fields & attend church drives up daily in his barouche to the door of his *fair Enslaver*, and basks the whole morning in her smiles. Have I been too severe upon the old man dear Mary? Or does it only *savour* of Mrs. Ledyard. Well I shall be satisfied if you are as lenient to my *severities* as you are to hers. Let me know how poor Anna bears the shock. I feel for them all but particularly for her – the female heart is more sensible to shocks of this nature than those of men. Their intercourse with the world rubbs off their tenderness of feeling – they soon recover from disappointments & sorrows while poor women nurse them in the cradle of Home.

Joe Stiles is to be married next month to a girl of talent & fortune.[1] He I hear views this act of his fathers as a dispensation of Providence.

Ask Mary Telfair[2] if her fingers are frost bitten & tell her to direct her letters to her sister in Washington, Wilkes County "digging {*? burning*} out of a hollow tree" this winter.

Sarah Cecil & Catharine Hunter are playing Miss Butler & Miss Ponsonby on Wilmington Island.[3] We miss them much, for they visited us almost every day indeed our friends have been kinder than we deserve & I shall always remember their attention with gratitude. Remember me affectionately to Ann Wallace Sarah talked of writing to her which she will do on her return. Love to all your family & let me soon my dear Mary hear from you your affectionate Mary

1. Joseph Stiles married Margaret V. Adams on 31 January 1828. He was the father of Benjamin Stiles.

2. Her niece Mary Eliza Telfair.

3. See Introduction, note 24.

34 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 5 FEBRUARY 1828

With all my listlessness thick upon me my dear Mary have I allotted this morning to writing to you. My first intention was to answer dear Frances's fond letter but recollecting her abhorrence of *prosing* in all its moods & tenses I determined upon deferring a conference with her while my faculties were benumbed by torpor – when a little sunshine gleams upon them I will write a long letter to her. I do not wish her to *run away*

from my *effusion* as she did from poor Mrs. Skinners tongue. It is the only *unchristian* feeling she possesses and I often smile at her hostility to *Insipids*. Sarah Haig who in ludicrous associations is Frances's kindred spirit designates them *murmuring rills* their mild gurgling is so monotonous to my ear that I confess I *luxuriate* in the – {*illegible*} *dash* of the *mountain torrents* of the north.

My object dear Mary in writing to you this morning is principally to enquire whether your Mamma received a letter from me dated in December with a check enclosed in it for two hundred dollars to defray Mary's school expenses – your not mentioning the receipt of it makes me fear that some accident has happened to my letter so pray if it is in your power *calm* my apprehensions respecting *mail robbery*.

Sarah & Alexander returned in safety to us again their pilgrimage – six weeks rusticity makes them enjoy the comforts of dolce domum. Sarah imagines herself a Heroine – a second Catharine of Russia in boldness and enterprise because she waded through a swamp on a grey Palfrey; and Ellen Douglass like was paddled in a little skiff across the willow bordered stream. I often dear Mary think of a remark of yours when I take my evening drive over the same road, interested in nothing, yet grateful for pure air and the sight of a glorious sunset. You observed to me that even in Paris the same ride was uninteresting. If you have lived in Georgia as long as I have you would *tolerate* monotony & make some excuse for my *excitability* when you have seen me amidst new scenes & new characters.

Dr. Cumming spent last evening with us, he had just received a letter from Mrs. Cumming she wrote despondingly. The swelling in her knee has returned. I fear it is something very serious and that she will be an invalid for the remainder of her life. Poor old doctor, I feel sorry that he should be separated from her for never was a man more tenderly and devotedly attached to a wife. You would love him for his philanthropy if you knew him intimately. He is very *enigmatical* – he caries about him an appearance of coldness & sternness which repels strangers – but it is only a cover for the man's tender feelings. I have come round to Madame de Stael's[1] way of thinking, that reserved men possess most sensibility. Shewy men are almost always hollow-hearted. Dr. Cumming always reminds me of Hanleigh, Mackenzie's man of feeling. He is a little like Mrs. Opies[2] cold tempered man too – he is certainly an uncommon *Man* and one that in-

spires me with the most perfect confidence. I can expose all my follies & weaknesses to him so chivalrous is he in his feelings towards women.

The sensation produced by Mr. Stiles's marriage has subsided – his nuptials were solemnized very privately not even his children knew the time fixed upon – he took his bride home in his *Car* (a truly {? *lavish*} one of course). I doubt whether they realise the {*illegible*} I have often admired of Ulysses taking Penelope home in his Car with modesty inscribed underneath for she was in the act of gracefully folding her veil around to conceal her blushes. The *unique* pair sought the rural shades of green Island the next day and are expected to return to their city residence this morning and (*don't roar*) are to sett up three days to see company. George Cumming declares the cake will be the size of a grindstone. I have no doubt *a hole* will be made in it very soon for she belongs to an *eating tribe* – moreover she is "a murmuring rill"[3] but inform Anna that she is very amiable it may tend to reconcile her to her young Mamma.

This letter is unusually short for me but I am very stupid – a large cup of coffee failed to inspire me this morning. My brightening hour you well know is after candle light. And now after this preamble dear Mary I will say farewell with love to all your family. Ever your Mary

1. Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker, Madame de Staël (1766–1817), a French woman of letters. Her first major published work was *De la littérature, considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales, de l'influence des passions* (1800), which was followed by her two novels, *Delphine* (1802) and *Corrine* (1807). Her major work on German Romanticism, *De l'Allemagne*, was published in 1810. Napoleon Bonaparte was so angered by de Staël's praise for German culture that he banished her from France. She moved to Switzerland, where she established a *salon* that was a center of progressive political and intellectual discussions.

2. Amelia Alderson Opie (1769–1853). Here Mary Telfair seems to be misremembering Opie's "odd tempered man."

3. This may be an adaptation of "Liquid lapse of murmuring streams," Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 8.263.

35 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 27 MARCH [? 1828][1]

Your *spirit stirring* letter my dear Mary was greeted with my accustomed cordiality, and appeared just as I was sipping my tea last evening. –

I cannot pretend to say which proved most stimulating to my unfortunate temperament, the essence of Hyson, or of Few, certain it is that the soothing influence of Morpheus was required, and invoked in vain; for many a long *long* hour. Nocturnal vigils may befriend the Poet or philosopher, but they are very harassing to the unpoetic and unphilosophic mind, and I detest them as much as I delight in *nocturnal tete a tetes*. I can enjoy nothing very much without a companion, I do not mean a *moveable machine* – but such an one as I *have had*, who can enter into my views and feelings – A better acquaintance with human nature has taught me what nature never gave me – Caution – I have been so often deceived in my own sex. I have seen so much petty contention for superiority – so many little arts practised, and so much envy fostered, that I feel under more restraint in the society of women than Men.

Mrs. Dr. Cumming is one I am never afraid of – she has so much discretion and christian charity, that I feel a greater degree of confidence in her than most women. – Her House is a very pleasant one to visit at – she does not live for the world – neither gives, nor attends large party's but she collects a little circle around her very often and we enjoy a great deal of amusing and rational conversation around her Table – Our mutual favorite Catharine H – has been quite sombre this winter – she narrowly escaped a few days ago losing an eye. Her fille de chambre instead of rubbing her head with camphor out of mistake rubbed it with Bug poison – Dr. Waring is of opinion that nothing saved her eye but a closed lid – I paid her a *consoling* visit yesterday – she complained much of Ennui & low spirits – and seemed to think me an enviable Being to be exempt from both – If she knew my heart she would witness as much of *civil warfare* in it perhaps as her own – I try to be happy and to make the best of every thing and every body, but the world at times is a complete desert to me as well as to others –

I am inclined to think (entre nous) that she will be induced to make *a match of reason*. I do not blame people for forming *attachments of the judgment*, I rather approve of them if the heart can be made subservient to the head, now mine is too rebellious a one ever to be subjugated by Reason. – I have *studied her case* as a Physician does that of his patient, and I cannot determine whether she will be rendered happier by the change – The object has integrity of character and good sense to recommend him, but

he wants *Je ne sais quoi.* – Have you been able to analyse that fascinating something, which baffles the skill of the ablest Connoisseurs in character to define? You must have discovered the rare charms of which it is composed *in Paris* – I am happy to find *you* think with me that *simplicity* is as rare among the young as the old – I do not think it the growth of any clime or peculiar to any age, indeed I think every generation as the system of education improves, will possess less of it.

I believe it is inherent. – Sometimes we see more art & affectation in Girls of twelve and thirteen than in Women advanced in life. – Since we have had children under our care I am more than ever impressed with the high responsibility of a Parent and how very early the moral character should be formed – Sarah says it is a great trial of temper to form the habits, and much more difficult to manage Children than Servants – I do not agree with her exactly I find I can overlook or rather excuse very many faults that spring from thoughtlessness, but subterfuge & a want of {*illegible*} the foundation of every thing that is odious in character – If I know myself I would not resort to subterfuge to gain all that this world could bestow. To affect what we do not feel ranks next – how few think it a sin to appear through life in a fictitious character – *always masquerading* – Pope has been styled severe & cynical for asserting that some Women cannot *take their tea without a stratagem.* – How they seem to *prosper* in their way, and influence the destiny of others? Defend me from a *Machaevelian* character, I fear them as I would pestilence.

If you still pursue your *juvenile* course of reading I recommend "Pierres family" to you[2] – It gives an account of the Waldenses and it is full of pathetic touches. – I have just finished "Tor Hill"[3] – I was interested in it though it breathes too much of the spirit of the old romances for my taste it wants *simplicity*. – Beatrice's was the only character that commanded my admiration throughout – the effect which Court life produced upon her feelings was natural to one possessed of some original grandeur of Character. – I am now reading the "Memoirs of the Princess Lambelle."[4] I have *a passion* for Court Scenes, and Court Characters – but the age of Louis the fourteenth furnished the most brilliant subjects for the compiler of Memoirs – There is something so harrowing to the feelings in every thing connected with the french Revolution and something so melancholy in the fate of the beautiful Marie Antoinette that our sympathies are too much enlisted in her cause.

Her character is not unlike Mrs. Hall McAllister – the same ardor in search of amusement, the same freedom & unreserve of manner mask them both. – How apt are we to trace resemblances between individuals who have flourished in History and romance with those who sometimes cross our path in life – I never see Ann Clay without thinking of Queen Elizabeth and how well a crown would suit her head – my fancy is not vivid enough however to discover *an Ulysses in a certain old man* who you were told resembled that Hero of old. – Your friend Mrs. Habersham has passed two evenings with us this winter she is very much excited *out of her own house* Sarah, who always speaks satirically of her, says I deserve *a Premium* for getting the right side of her and discovering that she can be drawn out & made to appear to advantage in a small circle – there is some sense in her *prosing* – it wearies without producing that excessive restlessness that some folkes never fail to call forth but who can never be accused of the sin of creating *mental dissipation* in the minds of their auditors – I frequently understand *the Ledger* influence, it is not *Ledger de main* but *Ledger de tongue*. I thought her manners and conversation delightful the evening I spent with her at Frances's. – You must become *acquainted* with Ann Clay this spring – she talks of spending some time in New York she is very anxious to know Mrs. Garretson so great is her enthusiasm with regard to her Character that I really believe she would almost be tempted to go on *a Pilgrimage* to Rhinebeck. – I think Ann values *a high reputation*. – Mrs. G must merit all that is said of her, but hardly one person in twenty is what the world represents nothing is overrated and underrated as much as character – shewy people {*illegible*} when real worth passes unobserved. – Thank you for your kind offer of being Banker – I have no wants, it was *a house keeping* commission I sent you but which we do not now require. – We shall pass next summer at the north. I expect my illness in the up-country will prevent our sojourn there for the future – We shall not I fear get off before July which I shall regret, for I do love a long *long* summer at the north – I must return to Books as I derive my chief enjoyment from them at home, though to judge of me by my actions abroad one would naturally infer that I never turned over any *leaf* but from the volume of nature. – Do read Horne on the Bible[5] – I am engaged in reading it as my *stand by* – my digressions in the mean time are frequent – I try very hard to *be good* and though I have *no Cora to settle* cannot succeed – farewell love from all to all sincerely Mary

1. The letter's date is suggested by Mary Telfair's suggestion in June 1828 (Letter 36) that Mary Few and Ann Clay had met for the first time a few months earlier. See also Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 102–3.

2. Miss Grierson, *Pierre and his Family: or, A Story of the Waldenses* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1825).

3. Horatio Smith, *The Tor Hill* (London, 1826).

4. Elisabeth Guenard de Brossin de Mere, *Memoires historique de Marie-Thérèse-Louise de Carignan, princess de Lamballe, une des principales victims immolees dans les horribles journées des 2 et 3 septembre 1792* (Paris, 1801).

5. Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Compendious Introduction to the Study of the Bible* (London, 1827).

36 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 9 JUNE 1828[1]

We were all prepared dear Mary to commence our journey tomorrow but a circumstance of a most unpleasant nature occurred two evenings since to frustrate our plans, and induce us to embark in the course of a week for the North – We were returning home from a friends with whom we had passed the evening which fortunately for us was a fine moonlight one when in a state of intoxication our Coachman dropped from his seat – we never missed him but happening to turn my head I discovered the seat vacant – the Horses keeping a straight course – Alexander endeavored to stop them by his voice – The Carriage being closed in front he could not get the reins – fortunately I had (though dreadfully alarmed) presence of mind enough to order our footman to run & stop them which he did to my surprise – If our other pair of Horses which we use quite as much had been in (& it was a mere matter of chance that they were not) we must have been dashed to pieces – a kind Providence alone seemed to have protected us – The wheel run over the legs of the driver without seriously injuring either of them – I know nothing that could have depressed me so much but the death of an intimate acquaintance – Alexander to gratify us purchased very lately the Servant – He once belonged to our family and we placed so much confidence in him that it was a terrible shock to find him unworthy of it – Our best intentions often are productive of evil consequences – Alexander would not consent to our having him to wait in the House though a complete House Servant & elegant waiter – because he wished him to lead an easy life – Every indulgence was granted him – where as if he had been

kept constantly employed he would not have had time enough to indulge in that fatal propensity – however when men of Genius are sacrificed to it we cannot wonder at those who have no intellectual pursuits – for we daily observe that a devotion to literature is no safe guard against that odious vice – You have heard me speak of Dr. Marshall who I considered the most agreeable man in conversation in Savannah – He died a week ago the victim of intemperance – It must have been a horrid death and I can never think of it without shuddering.

I am glad that you had the opportunity of enjoying the society of Ann Clay. I know no two people better calculated for each other & yet you are very different – she is all energy & you are all humility – she brings forward all her stock of information you keep yours as a miser does his hoard – much as I admire her I could never love her as much as I do you – for this reason, I suspect she wants tenderness & sympathy.

I am grieved to hear how near you were losing your Father, and hope he may yet be spared to you for some time – I feel whenever I part from you as if I should not see him again. His affectionate kindness to me on all occasions I can never forget – and I look forward to the prospect of seeing him this Summer as one of my pleasures.

I am glad to hear of Mary's improvement – there was good room for it and I thought indolence in her was too confirmed to be overcome – Margaret goes on with us – I wish her placed at a country School for the summer – she is very much changed for the {*illegible*} has lost all sprightliness of disposition {*illegible*} complete *woman* in appearance & disposition without any information – *Solid* improvement she requires, she has a taste for every thing frivolous and far greater notions of independence than any of us – Her mind resembles that of our family but nothing else – There is a *management* about her I do not like – I never saw finer materials for Education to have worked upon but the *hollow tree* was the only source of improvement and a *hollow* source it was – I am obliged to have all my faculties awake to defeat *manoeuvring* I begin to think the moral character of a child formed at the age of seven years – We have no plans except that of remaining in retirement – My taste & inclination leads to Wilkes's Cottage – do you think we can get accommodated there I should like to be near you – I wish Alexander to make little excursions to West Point & other places. If we get into your neighborhood I do not mind his leaving us for a

day or two – I hate the idea of encountering the bustle of Broad Way – It only suits English *nerves* and French spirits and I have neither.

I wrote to Frances by Mrs. Cutler the letter it seems was lost and the poor old Lady was in great distress about it – I am enjoying an enchanting breeze which always reconciles me to heat – Savannah is a cooler place than New York – Love to all – Ever your affectionate Mary

1. The dating of this letter is based on Mary Telfair's reference to the death of Dr. William P. Marshall, a native of South Carolina, who was thirty-five when he died from what Savannah officials described as an "Inflamatory Fever." *Register of Deaths in Savannah*, 4:219.

37 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 16 DECEMBER 1828

I hope my dear Mary that your *silent* fit will not continue much longer, for I am very dependent upon your letters for my *intellectual nourishment* do not infer from this that they benefit the head alone for I assure you they are a cure for the *heart ache*.

I am half disposed to be jealous of your widower neighbor I feel a rivalship towards him & have no notion of your enjoying his *jokes* more than my *stale* ones which I am sure Frances gives the preference to for *Auld lang syne* – some she has listened to many a time often with as much pleasure as you do to the more classic ones of the gay Virginian.

There is certainly a difference between the sunshine that illumines this world and that which lures to brighter worlds – it is wonderful how any but a Christian can be uniformly cheerful, and yet we see the joyands thoughtless living, as if they were immortal.

As this letter was intended merely to announce its *accompaniment* a box of oranges which I hope you will receive in a state of preservation. I packed them with *my own little hands* which go through with more *hard work* than you suppose.

Sarah Haig has sent a box marked for Kate Ferguson, the freight of which is paid but will thank you to send it to her No. 51 Warren Street. I am afraid I am very troublesome this to trespass upon your goodwill but as we think & feel alike on most subjects I take it for granted you derive as much pleasure from obliging a friend as I do – so a truce with further apologies. On board the schooner Othello Captain Bulkly the boxes are shipped the

sooner you open yours the better wipe them with a dry towel & put them on your pantry or closet shelf.

I must *chat* a little more with you dear Mary for I am always loath to leave you either when exercising my tongue or pen in your service. Your acquaintance Dr. Cumming has had a long and painful illness but is slowly recovering from it. I was afraid Mrs. Cummings's close attendance upon him would have caused a return of her malady but she is as well as usual.

We had a visit from Mrs. Gray[1] this morning the Mary Clay of former years – she is very popular here – her manners are simple & engaging and if you knew her you would not call mine a young character – I have felt for the last year *a hundred.* I would willingly transfer a portion of the feeling to Miss Charlotte White but I should be unwillingly to give it all to her.

What are you *doing* dear Mary, what are you reading, & what are [you] saying? I am all anxiety to have a long *codge* with you on miscellaneous subjects – if our talks could be published how much *edification* would the rising race gain from it.

I am afraid from {*illegible*} Mary I mentioned to you that Margaret has {*illegible*} her *Declaration of Independence* I wish I was {*illegible*} to upsett it. I suspect Mary's prudence is a check upon her volubility is the reason she dislikes going out with her. If we could have sheltered her in our own domicile I never would have given my consent to boarding school but she is better under Mrs. Green than she would be any where else.[2] I never thought I had funniness of character until she called it forth. The love of pleasure with her is so strong that I fear the sympathetic side of her character will be destroyed by it. Farewell sincerely yours MT My next will be directed from the uplands

1. Mary Clay Gray (1790–1865) was the eldest sister of Ann Clay. She married William Rufus Gray of Boston, Massachusetts. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 420.

2. Mrs. Green was a New York schoolmistress. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 145–46, 147.

38 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 5 MARCH 1829

Our correspondence dear Mary has met with interruptions this winter unusual in *our annals;* but though circumstances have made me silent, I nonetheless think often and much of you, and anxiously await the return

of our messenger to the Post Office in hopes of being regaled with a letter from *Mary Few*. Some of our feelings are insensitive to the leaden influence of the Tyrant Time, while others are completely effaced by the Destroyer. Unfortunately for us each revolving year cements more strongly the link that binds us to our relatives and friends. The pride of life is soon lost with rational beings, and then nothing but virtue & affection seems worth desiring. I very often hover around your domestic circle of *an evening* for that is my time for enjoyment after the tea has ceased to circulate and *kindred spirits* join in social converse – there I am dissipated but it is a dissipation of a purer kind than the mere votarists of pleasure enjoy.

My life is as retired as yours, and I am the happier for having no artificial excitement – I rely upon my own family – the society of my friends, and books for my enjoyment.

Our cousins are now on a visit to us – so that our family circle is very formidable at present. Cousin Margarets health is still wretched, but her patience & sweetness of temper are unimpaired. Our friend Mrs. Cumming is so far restored to health that she occasionally attends church but never visits & seldom walks out more than a few yards – she limps a little and is much reduced in flesh, but I never knew her so cheerful & happy – she speaks of you with great interest & affection and seems to value you *almost* as highly as I do. She has been improved by her illness – it seems to have weaned her affections from the world and to have inspired her with the deepest sense of gratitude to the merciful dispenser of all events for restoring her after such suffering to health. It is only on the bed of sickness and in the dark hour of sorrow that we are fully sensible of the utter helplessness of our nature.

Uncle is a great comfort to his mother and she doats upon him. I must say she is the only human being he shews tenderness for. I rather think the *fair Maid of Perth*[1] has awakened a tender sentiment in his heart, but he has never told his love. I am a little tinctured with a prophetic spirit & in my peeps into futurity think I perceive his destiny interwoven with Miss Bruens. He is very much pleased when she is the subject of conversation and gives Ann Wallace the credit of being the *first discoverer* of his penchant. I expect he will *challenge* Ann next summer for diving into his secret. Ann is in affairs of the heart what Columbus was on the ocean *a grand discoverer* – apropos you have not performed your promise of reporting progress relative to a *certain affair*.

I am happy to hear that Mary retains her high reputation at school. Her principles were always good but she had faults which Mrs. Green seems to have corrected. I am very sorry to perceive that an aversion to writing still exists with her. I fear she will be very, very inert. I am as you imagined very glad to hear of the decline of Margarets popularity with her school mates – her principles are by no means fixed and her influence can be of no advantage now to any one. I wish she could be influenced by her superiors – but the *upland* spirit (our *friend* Mrs. Skinner excepted) the desire to be looked up to is a powerful feeling with her. I wish you would give me an insight into their conduct etc. – you are an impartial judge and never exaggerate. Say to Mary that she must write & inform us if she receives a small box by the Emperor.

The extreme severity of the winter here has occasioned me many an anxious moment respecting Margaret, but I hope if the cold of a northern winter does not injure it will improve & strengthen her naturally frail constitution. We have had a snow storm and ice in abundance this winter. The sun for days has absented himself from our view, and our sky can no longer rival that of Italy. Knowing your *sensitiveness* to the rude assaults of Boreas I am happy to find you have with your wonted *skill* devised ways & means to banish him from your Dormitory and by the aid of list excluded even his gentler Zephyrs, who in our hitherto *Ionian* clime I have permitted to fan me in the depth of winter.

We have lately come through a *fiery ordeal* and narrowly escaped the conflagration – forty houses in our immediate neighborhood were consumed and nothing but the great exertions of our friends & servants who were indefatigable until all danger had subsided. If I know myself my besetting sin is not a love of worldly *goods & chattels*. I was perfectly composed & only dreaded the consequences of exposure to wind & water – Alexander had been confined to his room for a week with a severe cold and would wander about to give directions for keeping the flames out of the windows. Sarah was weighed down with thirteen garments and still felt the cold – none of us have suffered any inconvenience from our *extraordinary energy*.

Catharine Hunter & Sarah Cecil enquire often after you. The former has a lively recollection of the Canadian tour performed in your company & delights in adverting to "hairbreadth escapes" as well as ludicrous adventures. We had quite an unexpected visit from Ann Clay last evening. She has been passing a few days with Mrs. Habersham incognito I fancy, for

none of her friends knew she was in town. We found her as usual charming to fascinating. She told me she saw Frances. I quite long to know the impression she made upon our *Character Student.* I really am not surprised at the enthusiasm she excited in the *Ward dynasty* for she is perfectly unique. The charms of conversation, countenance, & manner are so blended that the worldlings may be delighted with her – while her exalted piety fits her eminently for a companion for the religious and an instructress to the ignorant.

I never envy the rich, the beautiful and gay but I do covet the piety and useful intellect of a chosen few in this world. I lent Ann Mrs. & Miss. Garretsons[2] tracts to read knowing the veneration she has for the former without ever having seen her. What have you been reading of late? I have been delighted with Helen's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem.[3] I should like to know the author's name. He is a clergyman & must be a man of research as well as great literary taste. With love to all I remain yours MT

1. Sir Walter Scott, *Chronicles of the Canongate. Second series. [Containing St. Valentine's Day, or, The fair maid of Perth]* (Edinburgh, 1828).

2. Catharine Livingston Garretson and Mary Rutherford Garretson (1783–1879). Mary Garretson, a lifelong friend of Mary Few's, was a devout Methodist.

3. Gerhard Friedrich Abraham Strauss, *Helen's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem: A picture of Judaism, in the century which preceded the advent of our Saviour* (London, 1824).

39 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 17 MARCH 1829

Our epistolary intercourse my dear Mary seems to have received a renovating touch, and promises like the approaching spring to blossom anew and produce a harvest of sweets. You are *the labourer*, for one of your letters are worth half a dozen of mine – but you assure me that my *weedy* productions afford you pleasure, and I believe every word that you say and for that reason I will with all my dullness "thick upon my head"[1] attempt to answer your letter which refreshed me this morning by its interesting contents.

This winter has flown like an Eagle – and I have not passed it as profitably as I wished; and intended, and yet it has been spent in the greatest retirement. I have not even enjoyed a *fierce* conversation. The gossip of the Town becomes more insipid to me every day. How much time is wasted by

some folks in scanning the sayings and doings of their neighbors which if judiciously spent might make them useful, happy & respectably the better part of society. As your *acquaintances* here scarcely exceed the number of the Graces, I must not depend upon them to furnish the materials for this scrawl but rely upon the resources of my unfertile brain and play *the Egotist.*

The Valentine (which is a secret between us) was after being revised & corrected sent to the Post Office and duly received. I have been exceedingly amused by the criticisms passed upon it. A Lady quoted from it a few days ago and asked me if I did not think it *very smart* another remarked when it was handed to her – It sounds like Mary Telfair but she never wrote it. Like Junius I have escaped detection. The irony contained in it must have been very *artfully* veiled as I understand the receiver was very much flattered by it. *My Apollo* (that does not sound decorous) (now that he is a widower & *d'un certain age*) is to shine in the future in Washington. I am sorry that his family are so unfit for this situation. He is not the sort of man you would admire – he is too studied both in manner & conversation but as I am not as ardent an admirer of *Naturalists* in *Mankind* as you are, I can admire him extravagantly. I wish you could hear Alexander & myself quarrel on that subject. He is such an advocate for Nature & sincerity that he will never listen to my eulogies of any one who wants it. Mrs. Grey is a wonderful favorite because she is animated & natural. I like her very much & appreciate those qualities in her but I prefer Ann Clay with all her *studied charms.* I never myself sacrifice at the shrine of Insincerity and yet I have enjoyed the society of persons who I knew to be insincere – we seem to forget it when in their company but remember it when we separate from them.

I am glad that you have enjoyed the society of Mrs. Livingstone. Her talent for conversation I thought almost unique when I met her some years since. The sooner they displace the Brown's the better – for the trio were *formed* for Paris – The best specimen this Country could send. Mrs. L. must find it an Herculean task to make up her mind to *settle* Cora – she is too ambitious to be satisfied with any but a splendid alliance. What an error in mothers to look for that which cannot confer happiness? *Companionable* qualities with the gentler virtues united with a *useful* intellect is more to be appreciated than all the glitter of wealth or allurements of family, but

people who live in the gay world continually, must marry as well as do every thing else to please that world.

I am sorry that your protégé causes you so much anxiety. It is a responsible trust but you want nothing *but energy* to excel in the management of children as well as in other things. You must not think me a flatterer when I say your example without your precept will tend much to her improvement. *The widower* will have to hang his Harp upon the willows for I fear you will never consent to manage any more bairns. I am *a confirmed seer* and am persuaded that he has bowed in vain & shared the fate of Father Time.

I have just commenced reading Josephus[2] with a determination to go through with it. His style is admirable for the age in which it was written – very very superior to Bunyan and I only wonder that I should have deferred so long the perusal of a work so very interesting.

How is Ann Wallace? I hear of her sometimes through Miss Cutler. I presume she comforts her *beau ideal* sometimes when he is bed ridden. Sarah Haig in her dry way says Ann must be *hard pushed* for a hero when she turns to *Bond Street*. I hope she will prove a faithful Guardian to *her Ward*.

It is the middle of March, and winter has not ceased to reign – not a blossom to be seen – an unheard of circumstance in our soft climate. I do not quarrel with this freak of Nature for I love winter – it has always been my favorite season of the whole year. I love its social comforts & pleasures. When life was new I hailed Spring with delight it harmonized with the hopes of early youth – but now it makes me sad. It comes filled with melancholy recollections – pleasures gone – hopes frustrated – the loved ones whose society gilded scenes long passed have vanished from this Earth. You have felt as I have and view this transient life as a Pilgrimage. I wish my dear Mary that I could derive consolations from the same fountain that you do.

Remember me most affectionately to all your family. You cannot long more than I do for *a talk*. I felt when I was in New York last that I had *no good of you*. Adieu affectionately yours MT

1. Mary Telfair may have come across this phrase in Robert Jephson, *The Count of Narbonne. A Tragedy* (London, 1781), 1.1.

2. Probably a reference to William Whiston, *The Works of Flavius Josephus, the Learned and Authentic Jewish Historian and Celebrated Writer* (Edinburgh, 1815).

40 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 27 MARCH [1829][1]

I have felt an irresistible desire my dear Mary to write to you ever since I received your last letter; but I have been so engrossed with *Ebony work* that I have delayed from day to day holding a conference with you – Your Box was received & its contents in a fine state of preservation – The oysters were delightful – Sarah desires her thanks to you for the little mustard volume, which I have not *mustered* enough time to peruse. I am now deeply engaged in reading Washington Irving's Columbus[2] – There is something original & bewitching in his style perhaps a little too smooth & polished – My reading this Winter has been chiefly serious, and I have depended upon Books for all my enjoyment. – Have you read Blue Stocking Hall?[3] – many of *our* sentiments are expressed in it & I think, though the characters are too highly drawn, that there is much to admire in it. Now a days, I seldom do more than skim the surface of a novel – There was a time when I could *devour* every word. – I have literally become too old to enjoy *Fiction* in any form – Wholesome *Reality* is what I crave – You enquired in your last letter if I had been to see *old* Mrs. Stiles – she *richly* deserves that epithet – I have not been to see any one but the two Mrs. Hunters – who have been exceedingly attentive to us – I met Mrs. Stiles taking a Drive in her *Car* yesterday afternoon. – I rather think she will be a *Conformist* – I hear he goes *to Roost* with the Fowls at seven o clock – how terrible to be condemned to the pillow for so many wearisome hours. If she had our *talking propensity* it would be a penance as severe as ever poor Pilgrim endured.

The commotion this marriage produced, has entirely subsided – does it not prove that the worlds dread laugh ought not to be regarded if people think it essential to happiness?

I have dear Mary two more Querries for you to answer – We have got a Pastor for our Church – a man without refinement or education – a native Georgian – he is said to be a man of some Genius & great piety – I love to see the Christian & Gentleman combined – I fear in Mr. Baker that union is wanting – The Trustees thought it important to fill the Church, its present condition is truly forlorn and as they could not command talent, eloquence & piety they determined to get who they could – so Mr. Baker is Hobsons Choice – I went Sunday week to the Episcopal Bible Class & am delighted with the manner in which it is conducted – They draw Questions

& write Essays which are read aloud by the Clergyman – As it is an *Incognito* business one feels secure at not being discovered – Louisa McAllister transferred her Question to me – It was "What attestation does Christ bear to the Character of Nathaniel." – I did not attend to hear it read but Sarah went and returned highly delighted with *Nathaniels success* – The credit was due to Alexander as he gave the *finishing touch* to the Portrait – I think writing Bible answers more improving than attending the best sermons that can be preached – The research that is required gives one such clear views of scripture. Divinity {*illegible*} be a most interesting study and I wondered {*?that*} it does not excite more enthusiasm in those {*?who*} pursue it as a profession.

Another question of yours remains unanswered – Have you seen Miss Clay this winter? – I have not but hear she is engaged in improving the minds & morals of their Slaves – her success I believe is not equal to her exertions. – She is one whose mind & character fills her for an extensive sphere of usefulness. – I think her more formed to command esteem & admiration than to be beloved – She belongs to that class of Women who Alexander says are better calculated for Queens than wives – however I am a great friend to strength & decision of character. – You will receive by the Ship Emperor – Capt. Bennett a Box containing an ebony Work Box of my own painting or rather scratching which though destitute of value I hope will be the companion of your industrious moment – a *silent* Representative of your absent friend in it is a letter & parcel for Frances after you have taken out your work Box will you send immediately the Wooden Box & its contents to Miss Irwin whose residence is No 89 Warren street.

How is Mary Telfair? – she does not deserve a kind word from one of us for she never writes and I presume never thinks of us – I suppose she did not relish my letter of *advice* – I always felt gratitude to those who gave it to me and I hope she will yet learn to value it. – Remember me affectionately to all your family and let me hear speedily from you – My next will be more diffuse – I have the cramp in my Brain to day affectionately your MT The freight of the Box is paid – you have only to get it from the Captain.

1. The date of this letter is suggested by the references to Washington Irving's *Columbus* (published in 1828) and to the Reverend Daniel Baker's appointment as pastor of Savannah's Independent Presbyterian Church, also in 1828.

2. Washington Irving, *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (New York, 1828).

3. William Pitt Scargill, *Blue-stocking Hall* (London, 1827).

41 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 5 MAY 1829

Your last letter dear Mary was *circumstantial,* and acted as a cordial to my heart after the *brief* effusions which of late have called forth my *ire.* You know my hostility to short letters & love of long ones. As a proof of my gratitude for your *family legend* I have seized upon a sheet of foolscap paper to fill it (if it is possible) to overflowing. My *bright fits* are now "like Angel's visits few and far between."[1] I find myself becoming graver every day, the things that formerly interested me, interest no longer – and occupation now fills the place of pleasure. At this season of the year, when the body is enfeebled by languor, employment is very necessary and I endeavor to vary mine so as never to be idle.

I am engaged at present in reading the life of Matthew Henry,[2] and as far as I have progressed am delighted with it. His character was a very pure one, and more strongly imbued with the spirit of Christianity than any I have ever known. He must have read the Scriptures with great attention for the most simple expressions that would have escaped the attention of any other person seem to have struck him with great force – his explanations of them are very happy. I do not dislike his quaintness though I am not a friend to what is usually styled a quaint style. Have you read the life of Colonel Hutchinson written by his wife.[3] Ann Clay sent it to me a week since. It was written during the civil wars of Cromwell. A Christian soldier is not a common character in this age and it is impossible not to be interested in the biography of Colonel Hutchinson the union of wisdom & valor with the kindly affections that adorn domestic life & piety that would have done honor to a Divine renders him as remarkable as he is interesting. The simplicity with which she sketches his various virtues is quite affecting, *though written in old English.*

I must have access to *female lore* (alias) gossip in order to fill my pages – some women would consider a letter without that precious article as uninteresting as a romance without love, but you & I can do without either.

I have lately formed an acquaintance from whose society I have derived great pleasure – Mrs. Cutler – she is the best substitute I have ever found

for *my* Miss Jane Taylor. She possesses a cultivated mind, great reflection, and perfect integrity of character. I have ceased to value characters that are not governed by principle – feeling alone cannot be relied upon. Before I enter more deeply into the spirit of detail I will thank you for the pleasing information your last letter contained respecting Mary – to learn that her health was restored relieved us from a state of great anxiety, and we all feel very grateful to you & yours for the kindness shewn her – it proves what I have always thought that real friends are more valuable than gold, and I hope I view them as my greatest earthly treasure.

I cannot yet give you my opinion on the early history of Enthusiasm,[4] as the Habershams box which contains it, has not yet arrived, but I am very certain from your remarks upon it that much interest is in order for me from the perusal. The french handkerchief has been received and very much admired – the pattern is quite in demand and I am much obliged to you for *smartening* me.

In a box which I have sent to Mary & Margaret is a fortune teller to amuse your visitors – you twitch the circle round and wherever the *Witches* stick points is the fortune. I met with it at the last Fair. I wish you to read Blue stocking and {*illegible*} the *sentiments* – some of them are admirable {*illegible*} there is a sprightliness & point in the letters which will amuse – upon the whole there is too much of romantic perfection in the Glenalton family. I have sent it to you in the said box.

On board the Emperor is a barrel of grits for you marked Mrs. Few. I was in hopes of sending you some Georgia Hams but our stock has not yet descended from the Highlands. We regret exceedingly that Mr. Chrystie should have been so near without visiting us – we might have shewn him every thing here in a short time – and Savannah looks so beautiful at this season – the trees are in full foliage – the air pure & cool – the woods filled with wild flowers – we have had strawberries for three weeks. How I regret that you should have missed such an opportunity of visiting the *"Sweet South"* at this fragrant season – I would have met you in Charleston & conducted you here – all my friends lament not seeing you particularly Mrs. Cumming & *Uncle*. Elizabeth Bond was married on Tuesday last & went off with *"her old Man"* the next morning. Mr. & Mrs. Rich. Habersham were at the wedding – the latter who thinks every woman in Savannah *antiquated* after twenty says he does not *look* too old for Elizabeth – *looks* go but a little

way towards happiness – the inward Man is of more importance than the *outward* and as Shakespeare justly observes, " 'Tis not the front & visage of a Man that stamps his merit."[5] I am disposed to think from a remark she made to me that hers has been altogether a match of calculation. If we had mirrors to reflect *hearts* as well as faces – we should find many bowing before the holy altar with hearts unoccupied by that affection which seems necessary to bear a woman through the cares, the duties & uncertainties of married life. It is said we are to have another northern Lady transplanted by Hymen to our land – Mr. Joe Cumming is thought to be engaged to Miss Shepple of Philadelphia – he is a Professor of Religion – she seems a cheerful woman not unlike Mrs. Dr. Jones in character & manner. Love to all your dear circle – affectionately yours Mary The fortune teller resembles Miss Powell.

1. Campbell, *Pleasures of Hope*, 2.375.

2. J. B. Williams, *Memoirs of the life, character and writings of the Rev. Matthew Henry* (London, 1828).

3. There were several editions of Lucy Apsley Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson,* including those published in London in 1806, 1808, and 1822.

4. Probably Isaac Taylor, *Natural History of Enthusiasm* (London, 1829).

5. This phrase is not to be found in the works of Shakespeare. Where Mary Telfair came across it remains a mystery.

42 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 2 DECEMBER 1829

Your letter dear Mary arrived here, I presume about the same time that mine reached Park Place – I need not say how cordially it was received, and how much I felt obliged to you for the intelligence you gave of Margaret and the kind interest you have taken in her. Our anxiety respecting her, was very great, and I confess that until your letter arrived I thought of her incessantly, and my busy fancy conjured up a variety of disagreeable images – therefore you can imagine the relief which your communication afforded. It is not necessary to be a Parent to feel the responsibility and anxiety of one. I *pity* the mother who feels more than I have of late.

I regret that the pittiless storms should, two successive evenings, have prevented the Georgia Clan from taking tea with you, especially as you evinced so much *tact* in your selection of an *Entertainer*. Such an intro-

duction to the *Beau* Monde could not prove injurious to the *Demoiselles*. Frances's visit, my *dearship* informs me, has terminated by this time and you are no longer cheered by the prattle of *the Bairns*.

I am at present absorbed in a scrap desk – I found an *old, maimed thing*, which was my juvenile companion and after cleaning it of the rubbish of *the olden time,* sent it to a Cabinet Maker to get its joints mended and to acquire a little *modern polish* so as to be able to grace a *drawing room* after *slumbering* in a Garret, almost as long as Rip Van Winkle did on the Katskill mountain.

Tell Matilda my *emphatic* words, which were delivered like a *Sybils warning* are realizing daily – for fear that she may possess the organ of *forgetfulness* I will repeat them – *"all the world are marrying except you & I"* and I may add Sarah's remark by way of *match* to it "Every body is driving at something, except the Fews & Telfairs." After this *exordium* I must come to the point. I told you there was a *War* brewing up in the *Wig Wam*. My suspicions were excited by a simple question Miss Cutler asked me in her hurried manner, "What would you recommend! a Bride to go a journey or stay at home." I half laughing replied I recommend you to stay at home and seat yourself at breakfast table next morning and wash up the cups & saucers, as if nothing had happened – I then thought it probable that she would soon become *subject to* the *order* of *Saint Frances*. I understand the platonic pair have gone on a Honey Moon *pilgrimage*. I fear the wand of the *Enchantress* will be broken now that she has received the crown of Hymen and the *Triumvirate* is dissolved. I hear Mrs. Ward gave a reluctant consent to their union. It strikes me as a perfectly suitable match, but that rigorous *Judge* in matrimonial *trials* – the World – always thinks fit to condemn without sympathy.

The lot of women in this life is a hard one, and it requires instead of a *Coat of Mail* a *Coat of Independence* to shield her from the shafts of "envy, malice and all uncharitableness."[1] I have in more than one instance defended Miss C with so much warmth that I am convinced *the Gossips* have pronounced me ready *to pounce* upon *a Francis* if one should *straggle* in my way. I often quote Miss Powel (by the by) the only *saying* of hers strongly tinctured with common sense – "Marriage & Death always bring to light the failings of a Character." Remarks which bring one before the public are to be dreaded, for that reason women of *established characters,* should

marry *privately*. None but youth & gaiety seems to excuse "the pomp & circumstance" of a wedding. But I believe this an oft-trodden path to us, and we agree upon this as on many other subjects.

I have copied for you the promised letters from the Pays de Vaud, and will send it in a box, for it is too *voluminous* to send by post. You will say it is a kindred effusion to Mr. Sheys the same *"vehement simplicity"* distinguishes both. I preferred copying it to sending you the pamphlet for two reasons – it impressed the contents on my mind & I thought would induce you to read it more than once. Many of the sentiments reminded me of you even more than Miss Jane Taylor.

As I have nothing at present to write about I will close my letter with our united love to your domestic circle with the hope of hearing from you. I will say adieu. I feel that I have not "thrown the bridle from the Horses Neck"[2] sufficiently to interest you but I am to use Mr. Joyce's expression "under the weather" – appropos has he glided in to Fannys annoyance lately or does she vent her spleen upon *her neighbor*. Truly yours MT

1. *The Book of Common Prayer*, Prayer for All Conditions of Men.

2. Possibly an adaptation of "despairing to find his Way, throws the Rein upon his Horse's Neck, to be guided at its uncertain direction," Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (1742), Letter XXX.

43 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 29 MARCH 1830

I wrote a long letter dear Mary to you a few days ago by mail and was delighted when I returned from a ride out into the country to find over the mantle peice a letter from you. How shall I thank you all for your friendship to Mary! You cannot imagine what a comfort it is for us to know that though separated from her Relatives that she has kind friends to watch over her health.

My Brother says your Mamma must exercise her discretion and keep her from her studies as long as she thinks fit. I agree with you that a change to Weyggard might prove beneficial. The first intimation we received of her illness was from you, and though I know you are a *Literalist* and always give the fairest statement of every thing, yet I am very easily alarmed – particularly if a cold attacks the breast – Consumption is so insidious in its attacks, particularly in New York that I feel continued anxiety during the

winter respecting our Girls – Margarets very fragile appearance occasioned my thoughts to revert more to her – We heard from Mrs. McAllister that an Epidemic prevailed of a distressing nature and attacked principally the head – from the manner you describe Mary's symptoms I rather think she is recovering from it. Alexander wrote to Mrs. Green giving permission for her to take lessons in riding on horse back.

If Mary complains at all of her breast, flannel jacket with sleeves next to her skin would be advisable – None of us can go without them – Tell Margaret not to make any change in her dress until the weather becomes settled especially not to take off her flannel next to her skin – Will you my dear Mary speak to Mrs. Green on the subject.

It is very difficult for us to influence them at such a distance the thoughtlessness of youth you know requires friendly hints from the Experienced. If it is necessary for Mary to put on flannel jackets will you ask Mrs. Green to get guaze flannel and have them made immediately (Entre nous) we think Mrs. Green a little of a *Procrastinator*. I hope you will keep Mary with you until she is quite well poor child how solitary she must have felt shut up alone at Mrs. Greens – it was enough to depress her spirits – Though she may be deprived of the enjoyment of reading – she may learn much from you all it will be of advantage to be thrown with people who will improve her heart – I dread heartless association for the young, who are but too prone to be dazzled by shew & fashion. Sarah & Alexander have not yet commenced their tour – I am glad that they have tarried with us until the blustering month of March is over – Alexanders health is much improved – upon the whole he has been better this winter than he has been for years past – he can now be out of an evening, and his spiriits are better – Our friends thought he looked wretchedly ill when he returned from the North – The summer climate there does not agree with his constitution – Our winter has been truly delightful – a perpetual sunshine how I wish Matilda had been here to enjoy it. It would have renewed her constitution. I have been much engaged in Fancy Work lately & have just completed an Ebony Desk, for my God-daughter – it is pronounced a chef d'ouvre in *the black art* – As the days begin to lengthen, I must begin to multiply my resources. I am engaged at present in reading Wilberforces practical view & the poems of Robert Montgomery[1] – The former was recommend to me by *your Admirer* and *Fanny's aversion*

Mr. Joyce – the latter was sent to me by his fair friend and Paragon Miss Clay.

Our fellow Traveller Mrs. Henry paid us a long and agreeable visit yesterday – Her figure has increased amazingly – her face is even handsomer than it was, hers is a style of face that *the Tyrant* will have little power over. The clear Brunette stands the test of time better than the blue-eyed fair – she is very animated and I think possesses a good deal of native fluency which is in some people more agreeable than *book talk*.

How does the knitting progress? I have taken to *netting* which is a more *genteel* occupation, though less useful. Frances instructed me in the art of netting in the Summer House at Greenwich she learned it from Charlotte Firth it seems like an *olden dream* – As the post closes at twelve I must bid you an abrupt farewell without finishing my Greenwich reminiscences – Love to all – tell Mary to write to me & mention particularly how her eyes are affectionately yours, MT

1. William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious Systems of Professed Christians* (London, 1797), and Robert Montgomery, *The Omnipresence of the Deity [and other poems]* (London, 1828).

44 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 28 MAY 1830

I hope dear Mary you will not be wearied with my frequent scrawls, but I cannot resist the present opportunity of holding a short *parley* with you and enclosing you a purse of my work {*illegible*} colours that I thought would suit the *Quaker like* simplicity of your taste. Miss Clay will not I fear present my *folio* in propria personae as she will scarcely tarry a day in New York perhaps only long enough to see her friend Mrs. Francis – Friendship, I think, delights in contrast as much as love, for it is impossible for two women to be more uncongenial in mind & manners than Mrs. F & Miss Clay – I received a few days since the Books you so kindly sent me, and am deeply interested in the life of Edward Payson[1] – What a union of rare talent, piety and virtue are presented in him – His early letters are beautiful and evince one of those pure and gifted Beings placed in this world as bright examples of high intellectual attainments and exalted piety.

The History of Enthusiasm[2] *Eve like* I have *tasted* of but possess self denial enough to reserve the bonne bouche for my compagnon du voyage.

My mind ever prone to *dissipation* luxuriates in it at sea – *Talk* is the only thing I *relish* on that deceitful element – my heart beats in unison with the waves – when the weather is fine and the breeze moderate I am *all gaiety* but when the scene changes I *cower* without complaining.

We have had autumnal weather for the last three days owing to a severe hail storm and I scarcely realize that I am in a southern climate.

The Clays talk of passing several weeks with the Wallaces at New Ark – Columbus will have a fine opportunity of *navigating* or rather *investigating* Anne, and if *possible* lowering her dignity – I hope you keep all my sayings and doings profoundly secret from her. My *weaknesses* would be fine sport for her. You seem to be the only one who stands her ordeal as for poor Frances – she presents her in such *ludicrous situations* that it quite terrifies me, whose darling idol is dignity what an enemy this is to enjoyment – I sometimes think my intercourse with the World and my knowledge of its *worthlessness* has made me insensible to the remarks of the insignificant, but when it is *brought home to me I cannot avoid feeling a little provoked – The worlds applause* I never covet but its respect I do.

I hope little Mary Chrystie has recovered from her chills, and that you are all together in Park Place. I believe it is the season for Frances to visit you – It would afford me pleasure to hear some of those jokes over again, that {*illegible*} to gild with sunshine the morning of life.

I am sadly changed in one respect, the *buoyancy* of my nature is gone, and you will not say this summer *when we travel together* that I am *sixteen in feeling*. You recollect the conversation we held in Rochester at the Pail Factory when we talked of *the pleasures of Emigration* & perhaps you have forgotten it – I say so little that is worth remembering, but dear Mary I shall never be *too grave* or *too old* to enjoy your society, and to feel that it is a refuge from care, sorrow, and ennui – For want of interesting materials to fill my page I will say Fare thee well, affectionately yours Mary

1. Edward Payson, *A Memoir of Rev. Edward Payson, D.D.* (London, 1830).

2. Probably Taylor, *Natural History of Enthusiasm.*

45 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 31 MAY 1830

I have just received your letter dear Mary and cannot permit the Tybee to sail today without bearing a few lines in answer to your *precious*

letter which Sarah is now reading. They are *almost* as great a treat to her as they are to me. I have been very much engaged with Dr. Paysons life and am deeply interested in his character. I scarcely know how to reconcile the union of such exalted piety with so much gloom and despondency. There must have been a physical cause for it; for his life seems to have been devoted to the service of Religion, it occupied his heart more completely than any one I have ever heard of – his health was sacrificed to his arduous duties, and yet he was very miserable at times. If so truly wretched with the consolations of true piety what would have become of his mind without it? I read him yesterday until *my eyes* ached and I may say ached and I may say *my heart too* for his melancholy *"frames"* awakened my strongest sympathies. His letters to his parents are very beautiful and breathe as much of filial love, as of heavenly love. I admire the simplicity of his character and the candor with which he avows his sentiments – even his *Courtship* was original, and I was delighted with one sentiment expressed to his Mother, that if ever he made choice of a wife it *must* be one he expected to meet beyond the tomb. His prudence is wonderful for one of so constant a temperament – and I know not which to admire most the brilliancy of his imagination or that judgment which so admirably controlled it. Imagination I consider a very dazzling facility but unless properly directed very unfavorable to the cultivation of religious feeling. I cannot say I was surprised to hear Mr. Chrystie was married – these who marry {*illegible*} must it seems marry {*illegible*} I hope for the sake of his children that he has made a suitable choice. I often reflect upon his life and think how often characters turn out the very opposite of what they promised, and what mortifying changes are incident to man in his Earthly pilgrimage – It seems a state of trial & temptation, but if I do not turn to something cheering I fear you will think dearest Mary that "the playful Sprites" which were wont to flutter over my pages have been imprisoned in the Dungeon of gloom by *"their blue Majesties."* In order to convince you that I can be *gay* and *sportive* I will tell you an anecdote that will make you smile – A poor french Émigré came this morning to receive a piece of linen from me to make up – She could not speak English and I in *broken* french tried to hold a conversation with her at length I discovered she was deaf and commenced *screaming* which brought two of the servants to witness *our parley* which was interrupted more than once with their bursts of laughter – at length Mamselle rose

to depart after asking me if I had a *Baby*. There must be something *anti spinisterial* in my *looks* as I invariably pass for *a Matron*.

As I wrote to you a few days since by Anne Clay I have nothing new to say. We are all well, though languid from the heat of the weather, and hope to see you in the course of a Month – Accept love from me & mine & distribute a portion of it to your family circle – Sincerely yours MT

46 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 21 JUNE 1830

I was in hopes dear Mary, of receiving an answer to my *Anne Clay letter* before this time, or at all events my *Cousin Eliza's scrawl,* but I suppose you have imagined me winding my way; or rather *ploughing* it along the pathless deep, and in all probability I shall not receive another line *to comfort me* in this ungenial atmosphere – We have been so *scorched* by the *flambeau* of Sol that we almost *shivered* yesterday under the influence of a north east wind, I put on my flannel while Sarah, who is always several *degrees* below me in heat, went to the kitchen fire to warm her feet – here is a *couplet* without intention.

My Cousin Eliza *talked* of Newburgh in her last letter as a refuge from noise & heat – They are so independent of society, so destitute of that {*illegible*} for it, which is the besetting sin of some folkes, that "deep solitudes, and awful shades"[1] possess attractions for them, which *we Talkers* could never enjoy. Sarah & Margaret visited them this spring & returned enchanted with their residence, which is on a little Island, embosomed in orange trees & roses – In looking over the life of Henry Martyn[2] (who is one of my Hero's) I was forcibly struck with his ideas of Indian scenery and the analogy it bears to ours – he remarks that the excessive luxuriousness of oriental vegitation imparts a gloom to it and I may add a corresponding gloom to the mind, for I never could feel gay in one of our forests.

I have finished Payson and sent him on a visiting tour – he is to spend the summer with Sarah Cecil & Catharine Hunter, who I am sure will cherish him with fond affection – I have taken the deepest interest both in the enjoyment of his mind & feelings – his tendency to melancholy renders his character more interesting than if it had been gilded with that regular flow of cheerfulness which gives to life perpetual sunshine but which seldom appertains to people possessed of deep feeling. I perfectly agree with you in condemning his Biographers for publishing his temptations – and

asserting that there was one if published, great enough to unchristianize the world, I am very glad that he was wise enough to keep it to himself. Human nature is too prone to derive consolation from the infirmities of others – and some may reason in this way – If such a saint as Dr. Payson was so tortured with doubts, and beset with temptations, we need not wonder at ourselves – I have attempted to read a very different life that of Byron by Thomas Moore.[3] I could not *wade* through it, but read enough to be dazzled and delighted by the wit and *gleams* of fine feeling elicited in his early youth – He was a strange paradox – like Bonaparte he is *matchless* his life was a complete romance, and I think if he had been blessed with a mother capable of directing his infant mind and subduing his turbulent passions his virtues might have been as transcendant as his genius – but he was trained to misery, and made a misanthrope almost from the cradle – His sensibility so illy directed, became his bane. Have you met with a prayer offered up for his conversion by an English Lady who died on the Continent – Lord Byrons letter to her Husband in answer to it is very beautiful, and proves that he possessed a heart not wholly insensible to religious influence – I have heard it remarked that there never was a great man who had not a superior mother – The inferiority of Lord Byrons did not clip the wings of his imaginations though it steeled his heart against the social affections and finally ended in ruin.

I have my dear Mary enclosed a *billet* to ship Irwin, which if Sarah Haig's *Heroine* Anney in some of her rambles will take there, she will very much oblige me – Love to your Mamma & Matilda yours truly

1. This seems to be a misquotation of the first line of Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*. The original reads "In these deep solitudes and awful cells."

2. John Sargent, *Memoir of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B.D.: late fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and chaplain to the honourable East India Company* (London, 1819).

3. Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: with notices of his life* (London, 1830).

47 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 29 JANUARY [? 1831][1]

I have just received your animating and animated letter, my dearest Mary, and fearing lest you should produce in poetical strains a *lament* over the tin Canister I hasten to inform you that *her Ladyship* (for a *dependant*

situation claims for *our tin friend* a title to the feminine gender) arrived in good condition, with her cargo of tea, and some beautiful specimens of engravings which Margaret said she would write to Matilda, and thank you for, as well as herself. – The sum she enclosed to you was 15 dollars keep the change – we may require some *little articles*.

Your *Seership* is not as infallible as mine. I may indulge in a little triumph on the occasion, as it is the only point of superiority I claim over you – The Cannister is the property of Mrs. Wm. Hunter – If I was not principled against writing jokes I would entertain you with one against *our little friend* which is Sarah's chef d'ouvre in the way of narration – How rapid appears the flight of Time as we advance in life! – and I may add how much more valuable it is in our estimation – To redeem that which in youthful folly I lost, is my earnest wish, but alas! What are human resolutions, and human efforts? they are "like the baseless fabric of a vision."[2] – You have been *too complaisant* to consult my taste to the exclusion of "*useful* employment and *patient inelegant industry*." I must revoke my decree against knitting and allow you all the privileges that *blue stockings* require – so "Knit on my Hair, still unperceived save by the eye of *sacred love*."[3] – The Metaphysician no doubt has *twinkled his orbs* on the knitting needles of many a fair daughter of Virginia – and does not (Sarah Haig says) value you the less for the accomplishment – She speaks feelingly on the subject for she has taken violently to it herself – Several Gentlemen were here a few evenings since and she threatened to take out her knitting, and I boldly whispered in her ear, You *shall not pursue such a vulgar occupation out of our family circle* – Our Coterie has been unusually flourishing this winter – we meet once a week at each others houses – Oyster suppers have been introduced which promote sociability – and our knot is the envy of the Town – People who shun the gay world require the stimulus of social intercourse – Home is the centre of attraction to me and I never wish even for a day to leave it – still I like to be enlivened very frequently by some cheerful faces besides my own family – We have hitherto introduced only needle work into our club – I have proposed reading a short peice each time by way of furnishing a new topic of conversation even if it gives our conventions an air of pedantry alias *bluestockingism*.

You would enjoy this sort of intercourse it is so unceremonious – so much of the primitive simplicity of the Swiss Cantons about it – *Our Lady Bounti-*

ful will not commence her Pilgrimage before March or April I am rejoiced at it – as I dread the effects of open houses and the various etceteras connected with a sojourn to "Cracker land"[4] fortunately no "murmuring rills" in the form of human {*illegible*} An association of ideas brings to mind Mrs. Richd. Habersham – she has returned from Beaufort in fine health and (for her) good spirits – she has sent several times to ask us to pass a sociable evening with her we declined invariably however the last time I told Margaret it seemed selfish to refuse – and we must brave the rude attacks of Boreas who whistles a perfect tune in her drawing room – It was a take in – a half out party. I sought refuge in a corner with Anne Clay & Mrs. Cutler the finest model of a Clergymans wife I have ever encountered. *Richard* took the men into the back room several times. I concluded to give them a little beverage – It reminded me of a driver taking his Horses to water. If I was *yoked* to such a Man I would change his habits if I could not improve *his morals*. There is something truly captivating in the character of *a perfect Gentleman* which to me is synonymous with refinement of mind and {*? morals*}

Mr. O is occupying Mr. Baker's pulpit as the latter is gone on a tour to distribute Bibles and will be absent two months. You will smile with your usual leniency at my enthusiasm when I tell you I go three times a day on Sunday to hear him, and attend his weekly lectures constantly – He is giving a course of lectures on our Lords Sermon on the Mount, and also upon his Parables – I have found them exceedingly interesting & instructive – Last Sunday he gave us a beautiful Portraiture of the young Ruler – I could not avoid drawing a parallel between it and our *Young Ruler* at home – I found several person's had discovered the resemblance beside myself so I was very much pleased *with my own sagacity*. Alexander thinks I am very proud of the talent which I appropriate to myself of reading character – Certain it is that I am seldom deceived now a days. It is one of the advantages we derive from – an increased knowledge of the world – You, dear Mary have read little Margaret with *my eyes* – She is a great cause of anxiety to me. I hope my Brothers influence will detain her at the North a year or two longer – Inevitable ruin will be the result of her returning next Autumn – The idea of her being launched at fourteen upon the wide world with unformed principles makes me shudder – I grieve at the thoughts of their being doomed to the *land of traffic* for *cleverness* in Wilkes,[5] consists in making *a good*

bargain Speculation is the Genius of the Place – Women enter into it with the same spirit that men do – Providence often befriends the orphan and as all things are ruled by him we can only rely upon his guardian care. I do not think my affection for Mary & Margaret proceeds from any peculiar qualities they possess – They are the representatives of a beloved Brother for whom I would have made any earthly sacrifice, and whose untimely loss I shall never cease to deplore – Every thing here is dark & mysterious and it is the sternest of all lessons to learn submission to the divine will, and to realize that afflictions are "blessings in disguise" – I cannot close without thanking you for your kindness to the Girls – Margaret wrote to me that she knew she would spend a delightful time, though she had been but half an hour in your house. Love to your domestic circle your friend Mary

1. The date of this letter is indicated by the reference to the age of her niece Margaret Long Telfair, who had been born in June 1816. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 431.

2. *The Tempest*, 4.1. The original reads "this vision."

3. The source of this phrase is unknown. It may have been Mary Telfair's own invention.

4. This is a slang term for country folk in Georgia.

5. Wilkes County, Georgia.

48 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 3 APRIL 1831

I feel so disposed to give you a *tremendous scold* my dear Mary for not answering my last two letters – but I am completely disarmed of all my *rage* when I take pen in hand. I will not say to you what Mrs. Richard Habersham once said to me *"You are my last hold on Earth,"* but I will say your society, your letters and your friendship (to borrow the expression of the celebrated Cornelia) *are my jewels.* It is not every body that I like to know the extent of their power over me.

I received a letter from Matilda this morning. She had finished her visit to Mrs. Johnson and was then staying with Mrs. John Howard in Sand Hills.[1] She seems to be enjoying herself exceedingly, and expected to pay her last visit to the Cumming family. I gave her a *furlough* of three weeks, and intend *ordering* her back at the expiration of this week. We have enjoyed having her with us, and quite long to see her again. She has won completely upon my regard. I feel as if I had never known her before the

fact is I have always been so occupied with you that I never could find time to cultivate the friendship of any one else in New York.

We received a visit from Mrs. Few this morning she improves upon acquaintance, but I still think Mr. Few[2] merited a different Help-meet. He is very interesting in appearance, manners and conversation and is an excellent preacher. I listened with great interest to a sermon he preached in our church on Sunday afternoon – it was upon the divinity of our Saviour. His arguments in favor of it were very strong. I should think that he possesses both enthusiasm and refinement. He resembles you very much in the upper part of his face – he is very gray – sorrow more than time I suspect has silvered his hair; his eyes are very fine, and express both sensibility and talent. I wish you could know him. I think he would excite a deep interest in you – so much piety and intelligence combined with excessive feebleness of constitution must excite interest. The latter alone is sufficient to awaken sympathy.

What are you reading? And what are you doing? Write soon and answer my queries.

Mr. Ward sailed this morning for New York it is whispered but do not say anything of it to Ann Wallace, that he came to bow at the *Throne of Majesty* – "The Queen" if he did I am sure she said *no* – I do not think she would like to be the *Guardian* of such a *Ward*. He is very excellent – but he is not the sort of man to please or suit Ann Clay.

I have been intending to write to Frances all the winter but have not yet accomplished it. My Seership tells me that she is now on a visit to you in New York enjoying herself very much.

Catharine Hunter brought her work and spent this morning with us. She has lost much of her vivacity. If only we can preserve cheerfulness in our journey through life we ought to esteem it a blessing, for every year robs us of some pleasure. I paid a visit to Mrs. Cumming this afternoon her society though not exciting is always soothing and I never leave it without pleasing recollections.

Matilda mentions in her letter having seen her sister, Mrs. Read, in Augusta, and sees the resemblance to your Mamma. I took her to see another likeness Mrs. Anciaux, who is a lovely old lady. I think next to Cousin Ignatius Matilda admires her more than any one she has seen at the South.

Our Spring is just beginning to unfold its charms – to me it is a melan-

choly season, and yet reminds me of our resuscitation when Mortality shall put on Immortality.

Remember me affectionately to your Mamma and write soon to your affectionate Mary.

1. Augusta, Georgia.
2. Mary Few's cousin Ignatius Few.

49 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 6 APRIL 1832

Your letters dear Mary are such a comfort to me that if the expression was not bordering too much upon the *extravaganza* I would compare them to the *balm of Gilead.*[1] My two last *productions* were written in my most unreserved moments, and after being deposited in the Post Office I could almost have recalled them, so dissatisfied was I with the freedom upon which I descanted upon persons and things – alas! it is this failing of poor human nature to be always sinning and repenting. I feel that I more than reciprocate the title you once bestowed upon me that of *"Mother Confessor"* – if I had lived during the dark ages my life would have been *one long confession,* but like the beautiful Mrs. Howard I should have forgotten my fast days.

I regret to hear that there is a probability of good Mr. Joyce's patent failure, it is very disinterested in me to feel for him for he always passed me over when Margaret was present, he has a *loyal* heart for I believe he finds *a Queen* "where'er he roves, whatever realms to see."[2] It is singular that so susceptible a being should still travel along the road of "single blessedness" when I should suppose he might find a partner if he would seek one "far from the worlds ignoble strife."[3]

Until I knew Mr. Joyce I never felt the importance of manner. A man may be a perfect gentleman, also pious & intellectual, and yet possess such peculiarities of manner, and singular habits as to mar his prospects in life. Eccentricity is dazzling to the young, but sober middle age can see nothing attractive in it.

A very singular marriage is about to take place here in a few days. Matilda knows I believe the Lady – Mrs. John Elliott a woman I understand of exalted piety – she married in the first instance a man old enough to be

her father and no doubt sacrificed feeling to ambition. She made a most exemplary wife & *(hardest of all duties)* an excellent Step Mother. For four years she has acted the part of *a dignified widow* which of all characters, *(Step Mother excepted)* is the most difficult to support, and now she is about marrying her husband's daughters husband – he has been living in the house with her ever since the death of his wife and I thought viewed by her with sisterly regard. I begin to think with Miss Edgeworth[4] that *propinquity* is dangerous and beyond the relationship of Brother and Sister *mutual dependence* is apt to create sentiments more tender than *the platonic*. The beautiful expression of the Psalmist "we are fearfully and wonderfully made"[5] may be as well applied to the structure of the mind as the body. The imperfections of human nature as well as every days experience and every view of our own hearts ought to teach us lessons of charity towards others, and constant humility and distrust of ourselves. I was told last evening that a very pious member of the church had remarked that the church would weep over such an act. It does not strike me as a criminal connexion, but one highly revolting to delicacy. I do not think our clergy will object to marry them. Mr. Elliott's daughters feelings are very much outraged, she was devotedly attached to her Step Mother but refuses to have any intercourse with her or her Brother in Law – it shows that the remembrance of a thousand acts of kindness may be obliterated by one act inconsistent with the general character of the individual. I feel sorry for Mrs. Elliott, she had in her first marriage to practice an *Apprenticeship* to self denial, in order to conciliate the good will of daughters as old as herself – by a noble and disinterested course of conduct she received their confidence and affection, and fulfilled her duties as a wife as faithfully as if she had married from *Love*.

Matilda's friend Catharine Hunter (for she made quite a permanent impression upon her heart) spent yesterday morning with me. We talked over the times past and present. I read her a paragraph which was applicable to the subject of conversation she was delighted with it and shall I tell you what she said? I will then venture as I never flatter – she said your letters ought to be published. I hope my dear Mary that you kept *the secret* I confided to you in my last letter viz. Mary's engagement.

Eliza Hunter[6] has just returned from a visit to Augusta and brings a

report that Margaret *is also engaged*. I really hope it is a mere report, poor child! I should grieve over such an event, but her mother would approve of it for she says every girl ought to marry at sixteen – do not think me satirical but she reminds me of Gay's fable of Hymen and Death "Sixteen say nay then 'tis time, Another year destroys your prime."[7] But seriously speaking, *it is an awful thing to marry at fifteen* – and such a disposition which requires the discipline of years to fit it for anything. I do feel things keenly at first, but there is a spirit in me, more *french* than the – {*illegible*} which prompts me to look to the bright side of a picture and if possible to shake off "like dew drops from a lion's mane"[8] imagining evils, and endeavor to reconcile every event in life, and I think and hope this feeling may continue – if it was *altogether* a Christian spirit I should be better satisfied but I know there is a constitutional elasticity in my temperament which yields immediately to the pressure of circumstances, and I feel so grateful to "the giver of every good and perfect gift"[9] for preserving the lives of those most dear to me, that all other troubles and disappointments seem light, compared with what might befall me. I never had a disappointment that did not bring salutary effects, and every selfish feeling that I *can* subdue, pleases me as much as Bonapartes victories did poor Josephine, whose Memoirs I have just finished.[10] She was too charming and disinterested and above all too unfortunate not to enlist the sympathies of every reader of her biography. I told Alexander some of her *little* traits of character reminded me of some of my own, he asked me to name *one*. I said I *was always ready for every thing prepared* and so was she, soon after I remarked that if I had been Josephine, I never could have tried to conciliate Maria Louisa on the contrary I should have *hated* her, he gravely said, "that is very unlike Josephine and very unlike *you*." Catharine Hunter's remark occurred to me, "We never know how high we stand until we lower *ourselves*," and yet I never wish to impose and would rather betray my evil propensities than conceal them. This is moral courage – is it not my *Preceptress*?

I am glad to find that Fanny could refuse three offers. I predicted she would be a Heroine from Alabama and that she will wind up her Romance with a *Member of Congress* and who knows but she may *aid him* in writing his speeches, for she will impose herself upon him. *Pretension* and *management* accomplish more for some folks than the combined attractions of wealth, beauty & talent do for others. There would be very little incentive

to act always from principle if we looked only to this world for reward – and yet there is something so soothing in the approach of conscience that I wonder how we can so often do that which awakens its remorse. There can be nothing so delightful as "a conscience void of offence."[11] The best rules by which we can attain it is to "do unto others as we wish they should do unto us." We can aim at it but to arrive at any thing like perfection is impossible our Natures are *too* sinful. Dear Mary I hope my egotism has not exhausted you. I believe I have room to throw in a portion of love to *merry happy* Frances. Write soon and remember us all to your Mamma & Tilda. Your ever affectionate Mary

1. Jeremiah, 8:22.

2. This is an adaptation of the seventh line of Oliver Goldsmith's poem "The Traveller, or A Prospect of Society." The original reads "Where'er I rove."

3. Thomas Gray, *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* (London, 1751), line 73. The original reads "the madding crowd's ignoble strife."

4. Maria Edgeworth (1767–1849). As well as being the author of influential of texts dealing with children's education, Edgeworth also secured for herself a reputation as a novelist. Her most significant works on education include *Practical Education: or, the history of Harry and Lucy*, 2 vols. (London, 1780), which she wrote in collaboration with her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, and the six-volume *The Parent's Assistant* (London, 1796). One of her earliest publications, in 1795, was the feminist text *Letters for Literary Ladies: To which is added, An essay on the noble science of self-justification.* Her first novel, *Castle Rackrent*, was published in London in 1800.

5. Psalms, 139:14.

6. Eliza Cecil Hunter, the daughter of Colonel James Hunter of Savannah, in 1833 became the second wife of Judge John MacPherson Berrien; after giving birth to six children, she died in 1852.

7. In fact she was quoting from Edward Moore, *Poems, Fables and Plays* (London, 1756), "Fables for Ladies," Fable IV, "Hymen and Death."

8. This is a slight misquotation of "like a dew-drop from the lion's mane," *Troilus and Cressida*, 3.3.

9. Cowper, *Works*, vol. 3, *Hope*.

10. George Ducrest, *Memoirs of the Empress Josephine, with anecdotes of the courts of Navarre and Malmaison* (London, 1828).

11. Acts, 24:16.

50 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 24 MAY 1832

I feel quite ashamed of my delinquency my dear Mary, but if I have failed to write, my interest in you is undiminished and I find in all my fluctuations of feeling and opinion that my heart is always warm towards you. – as *la coleur de rose* which in days past gave enchantment to every agreeable object in nature fades, I cling with greater pertinacity than ever to *old* attachments. Matilda & Margaret sailed to day in the Tybee in company with the Habershams Jones's and my Cousins – I begin to watch the Heavens with intense interest – but I will trust to a superintending providence to guard them upon the perilous deep and hope by the time you receive this letter that they will be safely landed in New York – I hope the South has left a pleasing impression upon Matilda's mind – it has certainly benefitted her health and I was delighted to find that we could make her happy at such a distance from Home – she was thrown in social contact with a variety of characters, and I hope she reciprocates the friendly feeling which she excited in some – Mrs. Cumming and Catharine Hunter are her warmest friends. – We cannot boast of fine scenery, neither can we exhibit any of the treasures of art – but we have much as regards soil and character that is valuable, and I have always maintained that the North has more to attract the mind – the South the heart.

Did you see Miss Goddard and what do you think of her? I believe she is eminently pious, her letters evince talent of the highest order and a most benevolent spirit – I am inclined to think her *azure* is of a *heavenly* hue –

There is something in the term blue stocking that conveys an idea of pretension to the mind and I hate *pretension* in all its grades – you enquire of me about the four days meeting, whether I attended – I did and was very much interested in Mr. Joyce's Sermons – he was the only good Preacher among them – it so happened that I was absent when Mr. Few preached – Mr. Baker was disappointed in not drawing men of more talent to the meeting – Mr. Stiles was an able ancillary – several of the gayest Girls in the place have become seriously impressed – Anna Stiles among the number she seems in fine spirits and appears to get along very well with her Step Mother who I believe is very amiable – I know nothing of Joe Cumming's proceedings, I was not aware that he took any share in the four day meeting – George Cumming was a shining light upon that occasion – his zeal increases every day he has entirely given himself up to his

religious duties – even social intercourse is abandoned. His Mother goes hand in hand with him even to the night meetings though the Doctor this {*illegible*} its injurious to her health – I have been reading an interesting work James's on "christian Charity"[1] and am delighted with his sentiments I think christians as well as worldlings more apt to want that essential than any other. If we could only learn to be lenient to others and rigid to ourselves what a different world it would be – As my hour for rest approaches dear Mary I must bid you farewel

Love to the Voyagers for I hope & trust they are safely landed at No 10 Park Place – Love to all – Let me hear from you very soon affectionately yours

1. John Angell James, *Christian Charity Explained* (London, 1828).

51 BROADFOOTS, SOUTH CAROLINA, 11 JUNE 1832

I was so hurried and *flurried* dear Mary before I left home that I could not steal from the march of time a few moments to answer your very respectable letter, determining to avail myself of the first resting place to do so, and to give you a circumstantial account of our proceedings. We left Savannah on Monday last at nine o'clock in the morning in the steam boat for Charleston, accompanied by our friends Dr. & Mrs. Cumming. The inland passage which our Capt. took, relieved us from tossing upon the ocean waves and afforded us an opportunity of seeing a number of fine plantations deserted at this season by the Lords of the Soil. I think the lower country of South Carolina a century in advance of that of her Sister State, but the up country is *le meme chose "Housekeepers at home"* fail as completely too in the discharge of their domestic duties –*fragrant* beds and uninviting meals characterize both and I have concluded that industry and management are only to be met with amongst the *Ladies* of our land – the *Women* are too, *too* lazy like the Medes & Persians they are so wedded to their habits that it is impossible to *revolutionize* them. I feel inclined to say "let them alone they are joined to their idols."[1] What recommendation cleanliness is? Mrs. Grimes who I do not often quote from, says it ranks next to Holiness.

After this description I will return to my travels. We spent part of a day & night in Charleston. I rode over the City and suburbs by the pale moonlight, one of my guides was an old lady of seventy and upwards who put me to

the blush by riding without her bonnet, while I wore a bonnet & shawl to protect me from *Malaria* for we Georgians have as great a dread of their climate as they have of ours.

I was very much delighted with the situation of Charleston, it is like that of New York, some of the private buildings are immense, and have a very venerable appearance, except Boston I know of no City that contains so many *lordly mansions*. The people appear to be very gay. I believe their strong local feelings, and prejudices, give a perennial flow to their animal spirits, they seldom travel, consequently see no deficiencies in themselves – they imagine that their city unites the advantages of ancient Rome and Athens. I felt that it was a reproach to me for my want of *amor patria*. Only give me a few congenial associates and I am at home every where. Still I love the generous hospitable spirit of the South, which commences its sunny influence in Baltimore, where I hope we shall pass several days, and that I shall see *all my relations,* and hear Mr. Duncan preach once more. After this second digression I will return to my "Simple annals." We hired two Carriages in Charleston and proceeded along the *great state road,* which a Pennsylvanian would laugh at, passed over Mr. Poinsettes Aloine Bridge, which is neat enough, but the rail road is truly ridiculous {*illegible*} light wood posts, and will be nothing but a {*illegible*} bridge – to me it would be *a bridge of Sighs,* for no sum would tempt me to ride over it.[2]

I delight in *internal improvement* but unless a piece of work is ably constructed I would rather see Nature *frolicking* in a state of simplicity – pretension in these matters is like employing a quack physician – life is jeopardized and no positive good results from it. Have you read "the ambitious student" and how do you like him? He is not half as interesting as Eugene Aram.[3]

We breakfasted in Camden. I intended calling to see Mrs. Davies but mine host informed me that she was passing the summer three miles from town. I regret that I did not see her for she is one of my special favorites.

You will probably see my Cousin in New York, they said on Tuesday next. You may report us well, and gradually moving towards *"the north countrie."* I hope we shall see you soon and that we shall compare our *annual notes*. You will find me now *quite as old* as you are. I do not think you will envy me my sojourn through the wilderness. What would become of Matilda if she had *to ride* four hundred miles. As the Camel is constituted for the

Desert, so are we Southerners for *marooning* and *roving*. Farewell – accept and distribute love from all to all – your sincere friend Mary

1. Mary Brunton, *Self Control: A Novel*, 2 vols. (London, 1818), 2:69.

2. The bridge over Little Gap Creek, on the State Road that connected Charleston with the mountains in North Carolina, was built in 1820. Joel R. Poinsett was the director of the South Carolina Board of Public Works when it was built.

3. [Anon] *Augustus; or, The ambitious student* (London, 1820); Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Eugene Aram: A Tale* (1832).

52 WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA, 25 SEPTEMBER 1832

I wished dear Mary to have written to you, and each day for the last week determined to do so but my resolution failed me when I thought of taking my pen in hand for I have been the prey of hopes and fears for the last three weeks, for we have been detained here that time by the illness of my Brother – he was attacked with a Pleurisy on our arrival here and for sixteen days his life seemed to hang upon a thread – the violence of the disease and the repletion consequent upon it has reduced him so low united with a most harassing cough that I feel almost in a state of despair – yesterday he was lifted into a Carriage by the order of his Physician and rode a mile & a half – he says exercise is all important, but I think he is too weak to take it – What we shall do I know not – My wish is to go to Baltimore or Philadelphia & take shipping from there home, but I fear when the plan is proposed he will never consent to our travelling through an infected region – It seems to me I could brave any thing to get him home with most convenience to himself – The Cummings's must leave us shortly if we cannot proceed on with them which I fear on our account will depress him too much – We are among entire Strangers and if it was not for Sarah Cummings I should sink under it – The effort to conceal my anxiety and misery from him is very great and I scarcely sleep at all – We have an excellent Physician and a coloured Man who is by profession a nurse to aid us in attending upon him – I feel grateful that we have been enabled to procure such comforts away from home & there is consolation to be derived from knowing that all human efforts & the most unremitting attention is paid – We must now depend upon aid more than human to restore him to us – I cannot give you any idea of my mental agony suffice it to say

that all other troubles (and I have had my full share of them) appear light in comparison to this – I feel as if my life hangs upon his but I will not dear Mary call any further upon your sympathy – if you write direct to Winchester Virginia – as I see no prospect of our leaving here immediately. yours affectionately MT

53 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 4 JANUARY [? 1833][1]

I have just received your last letter my dear Mary, and the anxiety you express concerning my health impels me to write to you (to releive your fears) painful as the task is. I knew you would feel anxious to know when we reached our desolate home and I requested Catharine Hunter to write a few lines and inform you that we were well. I have day after day thought I could write to you but I knew not what to say – It is such an exertion for me to converse or to write – All my former pursuits are tasteless, and I feel that there is no enjoyment left for me in this world – All that I desire is to be able to perform my duties and prepare for an eternal Home. Thank you for Miss Eastburns reflections they are very beautiful and evince no ordinary a degree of talent & piety. I rather think from her description of the evening and the expression *"Drive Home"*[2] that I was her Companion. It was just such an evening as the one I now behold and I almost reproached myself afterwards for tempting her to leave the House – It seems strange that the reflections produced by that ride and the simple word Home should apply to me as well as to herself it seems to have been written for both. It more than once occurred to me after hearing her relate the sorrowful events of her brief existence that the fate of her family bore in some respects a striking analogy to that of my own, and the Character of those whose early death she mourned seemed to possess minds & feelings cast in a similar mould – She had a pure spirit and I trust that she is now enjoying that Home which is the native element of the pure in heart. I have been here a month and I have not been able to summon resolution sufficient to attend Church I had a horror of entering our House after "the glory of it had departed."[3] I could not look upon it as Home, and now to go out of it is as great a trial as it was to enter it. – Uncle Jones & family spent the first week with us, after they left us Sarah Cecil came & remained three weeks, Catharine Hunter is now staying with us. – Our friends are devoted to us and if their affection and sympathy could alleviate our sorrow, our tears would cease to

flow – but comfort & consolation flows from a source divine – may that be ours!

I received Matildas kind letter and will write to her soon – our love to her & your Mother.

I will write to you in a few days and send you a check upon the Bank to pay for the Broaches I requested you to get and will give you more particular directions than on the Memorandum I gave you in Philadelphia.

I cannot interest myself in Books. I got "the Signs of the Times,"[4] but only read a few pages in it. My mind dwells so upon one subject that I find it necessary to be actively engaged – I have been packing up clothes for the Negro's & assisted by Margaret packing boxes to send to the Plantations which for the time occupied me – Catharine Hunter brought with her the Life of Archbishop Leighton[5] which seems to be interesting –

I have at present nothing more to say to you dear Mary but that my thoughts turn upon you more frequently than upon any one else in this world. – sincerely & affectionately yours Mary

1. The date of this letter is suggested by Mary Telfair's references to her grief at Alexander's death, which had taken place on 9 October 1832.

2. It has proved impossible to locate the original source of this reference.

3. This may be an adaptation of "Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubin." Ezekiel, 10:18.

4. Probably either Edward Irving, *The Signs of the Times* (London, 1829), or J. Bicheno, *The Signs of the Times: or The overthrow of the Papal tyranny in France, the prelude of destruction to Popery and despotism, but of peace to mankind*, 4th ed. (London, 1829).

5. Either Thomas Murray, *The Life of Archbishop Leighton, D.D. Archbishop of Glasgow* (Edinburgh, 1828), or Robert Leighton, *The Life of Archbishop Leighton; with a few extracts from his writings* (London, 1832).

54 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 22 MARCH 1833

Thank you dear Mary for your two last letters and for your family sketch – I am happy to hear that you are enjoying yourself in the second story – The winter with us has passed away like a dream and a sad, sad, one it has been – stillness reigns throughout our house "to mourning now is chang'd our mirth, the glad smile to a tear."[1] We have not been alone Sarah Cecil and Catharine have been with us alternately, the former is now with

us. They have both lived long enough in this world to experience sorrow and disappointments and to feel how delusive and uncertain are all human engagements. As for me I have learned to look upon this mortal life as a journey – "mysterious and full of awful events," and as Frances justly remarked I have known what it is to find "the disenchanted earth lose all its lustre"[2] – the link which binds me to the invisible world is stronger than any tie to this there is nothing here to cheer me in my pilgrimage through this vale of tears. I have finished Neffs Memoirs[3] in whose character & fate I took a deep interest – What fervent piety and zeal characterized him as a Minister of the gospel! how pure, how disinterested was his character as a man? When we meet with such characters either in society or in books how little and insignificant we feel – There is no trait of character so interesting to me as disinterestedness – it must meet with its reward in a future world – it never does in this, where selfishness predominates. We have all a besetting sin which creates a warfare within, and if we relied upon our own strength we should be helpless indeed – it is only when we fully realize that we have now an High Priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.

I put into the box for you a very sweet piece of poetry written by a niece of Mrs. Edward Campbells – only seventeen years of age when she was called to her rest – she was very talented and lovely in appearance – how common it is for the gifted and the virtuous to meet with an early grave? it is mysterious but all is mystery here except what the volume of Inspiration reveals "The pure in heart shall see God"[4] what unspeakable consolation is conveyed in that simple assurance.

Your account of Mr. Tillotson interested me very much[5] – I feel for all who mourn the loss of beloved friends – There is no connexion so close as that of Husband & Wife and yet generally speaking it is sooner forgotten. I think the reason is, it is the only tie which death dissolves that can be renewed. It is taking a melancholy view of the inconstancy of the human heart when we reflect that a few months after the most devoted wife & Mother is consigned to the dark & lonely grave, she is scarcely remembered, and in a year ot two another fills her place – alas! poor human nature! Matilda has seen our opposite neighbor Nicholas Bayard, and he lost his wife two years ago, and his little child the last of her race, six or eight months ago – he became very religious and has paid great respect to the

memory of his wife – a fortnight ago he offered himself to Sarah Glen and was accepted – she is a dependant, plain in appearance & unattractive in manners, but she is a very notable and a good housewife she will take to him the best dowry usefulness & economy – she was brought up by Mrs. Wm. Hunter and is a religious girl. I cannot but respect his course of conduct – he never played beau or went into company.

Catharine Hunter gave me a little fan for you which I have put into the box – Margaret has sent you a jar of her own work & Sarah Haig a pair of India rubber garters. Will you be kind enough after you have taken out all your things to send the box and the two parcels to Miss Irwin you will smile at my management in directing the inside of the box cover to myself, to save Miss Irwin trouble – Will you also send Mrs. Beebees to North Moore street – Accept love from us all including Sarah Cecil who often talks of you your affectionate friend

PS I am afraid dear May my letters are very uninteresting to you for I have no spirits to entertain, and I take no pleasure in hearing of what is happening in the world – I feel entirely emancipated from its interests.

By the Schooner Georgia you will receive a box – write and let me know when it is safely received. Sarah says I could make a business woman of myself if I did not hate it so much – I consider packing & shipping boxes the most agreeable part of business for there is *manual* without intellectual labor required.

1. It has proved impossible to locate the source of this quotation.

2. Edward Young, *The Complaint or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality*, 5, "The Relapse," 1068.

3. William Stephen Gilly, *A Memoir of Felix Neff* (Boston, 1832).

4. Matthew, 5.8.

5. John Tillotson, who was Mary Garretson's cousin, married Matilda Few in 1834. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 188.

55 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 13 MAY 1833

I cannot my dear Mary permit George Jones to go to New York without taking a short letter to you – I wrote by post about a fortnight since which leaves me nothing to say – Ours is a life of profound solitude you know we have nothing to do with the world, is its pleasures or its inter-

ests – I almost feel that it is wrong to listen to the unbudgetings of every day gossip – it is not only unprofitable but it has a dissipating influence upon the mind – I hope that Frances & Matilda Mr. Chrystie & little Mary have all returned from Norfolk the latter I trust is restored to health. I wish they had sailed for Savannah – the voyage would have been longer consequently more beneficial, and then they would have been with friends who would have been made as happy by it as the sadness of their feelings would admit of.

We received a letter yesterday from Mr. Edward Campbell saying he had rented a very eligible situation for us on the Sand hills – it is a retired one we shall have her the 1st of June – We hope that a change of air will be beneficial to us and will endeavour to occupy our time usefully.

Write soon for I long to hear from you – let me know every thing concerning you & yours – how often I shall think of you and the many happy days I have passed in your society so many summers gone by your affectionate Mary

56 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 9 JUNE 1833

I hope that this letter dear Mary will find you in New York and that you have all enjoyed your excursion and that you have not been disappointed in the object of it. When you write mention particularly how little Mary is. To revisit a place under any circumstances after a lapse of time, is always attended with melancholy feelings. You who are so alive to the changes of this changeful world, must have felt that Baltimore was changed, and divested of those attractions that gave a powerful interest to your former visit there. I have been with you frequently in imagination, and hoped to have heard from you, though I do not deserve it. In truth my dear Mary I feel so conscious of my inability to amuse you in any way, that it deters me from writing. What have I to write about? Nothing but my own feelings and they are too sad (if I could express them) to burden you with, my pursuits "tell all the same unvaried tale."[1]

I have been suffering for the last week from a severe cold & swelled face which combined with the disagreeable task of preparing to go to our summer residence has unfitted me for writing even to you my dear Mary, whose letters are among my solitary enjoyments. Society never can again possess a charm for me, though I feel that the company of those I love

can never be uninteresting to me. Catharine Hunter is going to share our retirement and though I value her many excellencies, and love her very much – she is not Mary Few.

We have been detained here a week longer than we anticipated owing to the Steam Boats ceasing to run. The Agent has consented to send one up on the 18 – had we foreseen the difficulty of getting up before we engaged a place we should have given up all thought of going and remained at our own home which is the best shelter for the timid and unenterprising. It is often a source of regret to me that I was educated to be so dependent for I cannot brave difficulties and feel that life is too uninteresting to me to put myself in the way of it.

Did you see Ann Clay when she was in New York – her health is said to be very bad but I observed no indication of it from her appearance. Louisa McAllister is in a bad state of health and unless some favorable change takes place in her constitution I do not think she will be very long a sojourner here, but human calculations cannot be depended upon, she may outlive many whose vigorous frames promise long life.

Have you read the domestic portraiture of Leigh Richmond's family?[2] We got it to take with us – from the first page or two that I have glanced over I am certain it is the sort of book to engage my attention. My mind is now in a frame to read, and I hope to devote most of my time to it, as there will be nothing to draw me from my books.

Sarah Cecil has been disappointed in passing her summer with us owing to the marriage of Eliza Hunter. She is to be united on the 10th of July to Judge Berrien the former Attorney General.[3] He is a Grandfather and the Father of seven children a difference of thirty years in their ages. She seems insensible to every thing but the glory of being his wife. Ambition is a rock upon which too many split and what different views people take of Grandeur. I have lived to think earthly fame a vapour and can say with my favourite Baird "The only aramanthyne wreath on earth is Virtue." "The only lasting treasure Truth."[4] I find it requires all the charity of my uncharitable nature to throw a veil over heartlessness & selfishness. I believe nothing but sanctified affliction can subdue those unlovely characteristics. Sarah desires her love and says she will write from the Hill, her antipathy to writing is greater than mine for drudging. Much love to your Mamma and family write as soon as you receive this (I am very exacting) Truly

yours Mary Fishkill is a sweet spot I always felt inclined to quarrel with her for not improving it now I am glad she did not as it would have made her regret more parting with it. Trees & plants teem with associations and I think our affection.

1. Henry White Kirke, *The Poetical Works* (1830), Miscellaneous Poems, "Solitude."

2. Legh Richmond, *Domestic Portraiture; or, The Successful Application of Religious Principle in the Education of a Family: Exemplified in the Memoirs of Three of the Deceased Children of the Rev. L. Richmond* (London, 1833).

3. Eliza Cecil Hunter married John MacPherson Berrien in Savannah's Independent Presbyterian Church on 10 July 1833. Berrien, who was born in Rocky Hill, N.J., in 1781, was a member of the Georgia Senate 1822–1823, and a U.S. senator from Georgia 1825–1829, 1841–1845, and 1845–1852. He was the U.S. attorney general 1829–1831 and in 1845 served as a justice of the Georgia Supreme Court. Berrien died in Savannah in 1856.

4. Cowper, *The Task*, Book III, "The Garden," line 266. The exact quotation is "aramanthyne flower."

57 SUMMERVILLE, GEORGIA, 3 JULY 1833

I received your letter dear Mary a day or two after our arrival at Summerville, and was happy to find your Mamma had accomplished her long projected tour to Maryland, and hope it will prove of advantage to her health and spirits. To meet with the friends of our youth after a separation of years is attended with many painful feelings. We are all so much the creatures of association that to revisit a place is seldom productive of much enjoyment – for changes must occur, and many of them of a sombre nature. I have loved Novelty both in Scenery and character, but I shall never love it again.

We are settled down here in a comfortable well-furnished house removed from the sight of any other habitation, and embowered in Trees & shrubbery. Sarah turned immediately to her domestic avocations, and in two hours we were *to rights*. I was glad to make up beds to divert my thoughts from dwelling too much upon the loneliness of our situation – indeed it seemed a renewal of past sorrow, and days passed before I could feel that several months were to be spent here. Hitherto I have been able to identify myself with every spot that I have visited, but either my nature is entirely changed or the soil is uncongenial to my taste, for I never could

feel *at home* in our dear Augusta. Catharine Hunter says our love of *high Masts* is the cause, and that she has discovered in me a mercantile spirit, and that when the newspapers arrive I look at the *shipping list* instead of *Poets corner*. We go through our routine of reading, sewing, riding, and walking – one day does not differ from another.

We have seen a good deal of our kind friends Mr. & Mrs. Campbell. She is very lovely in mind and character. She rode from church with me last Sunday and I thought her conversation equal to a sermon. Her religion is practical, her usefulness extensive – her children already evince the influence of her education of them – little Edward is devoted to us, he is the companion of our walks and rides – our Pioneer, through the Pine barren he points out the different houses, tells us a little of the owners and is a most intelligent guide for four years of age. Sarah Haig says he is the only being on the Hill whose society has any power over me. When we are laboring under a depression of spirits nothing so soon causes a momentary forgetfulness or cheer us but Nature and the society of an artless intelligent child.

The Sandhills are superior to what I expected as regards cultivation. The white cottages have a sweet appearance surrounded by trees & flowers but you who have been accustomed to the sublimity of Mountain scenery could admire nothing here. Health & retirement are the objects we seek – if we obtain them we shall be quite satisfied, for we cannot enjoy society. Several families have called but as we do not visit we cannot expect them to visit us.

Your friends Mrs. Davies & Ann Cumming have called twice – we only saw them once. The former I liked exceedingly some years ago – her character I respect very highly. Catharine is quite pleased with them all. Mrs. Henry our former fellow traveller through Canada resides here, she is Catharines chaperone and gives her all the gossip of the Town – she is a woman of amicable disposition and great cheerfulness, and very fond of society.

We have been engaged lately in reading the domestic portion of Legh Richmond his character fully realizes my ideas of a Christian Father – his mind exhibits a rare union of taste, elegance, exalted piety, and good common sense. What privileges his children enjoyed? The every day conversation of such a man independent of education was a field of instruction and rich enjoyment – next to him ranks Heber[1] I have lately read his hymns and his letters bear the impression of his pure and lovely character. I have

read almost as much this fortnight that I have been here as I did during the whole winter in Savannah. I often wish while strolling through the woods that you were my companion that we might communicate our thoughts and feelings to each other.

When you write let me know Frances's future plans. Will she live with you or keep her own house? Give me your "domestic portraiture" and do not think any thing too trivial to write about – you know your letters have always been a high source of enjoyment to me and will continue to be so as long as I am a sojourner in this veil of tears.

A great deal of love to your Mamma & Matilda & Frances if she is near you. I am truly happy to hear of little Mary's recovery and hope she will long be spared a comfort and blessing to her parents. Catharine unites with Sarah & Margaret in affectionate remembrance to you. Sincerely & affectionately your Mary

1. Reginald Heber (1783–1826), who became bishop of Calcutta in 1822, was best known for his hymns, such as "From Greenland's Icy Mountains" and "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!"

58 AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, 9 JULY 1833

A fortnight has glided silently & sadly away dear Mary since we took possession of our new abode & I begin to feel as much at home as I can in this World. My occupations are of a sedentary nature, sewing, writing & thinking. We usually ride or walk every evening but there is little pleasure in either, so heavy are the roads that we, as well as our cavalry are much incommoded by the depth of the sand. We drove last week to the spot where the light first dawned upon Sarah & myself – the hand of desolation had swept away every trace of former grandeur – the venerable grove where Druids might have worshipped, and the clustering grape vines under which we used to swing in the sunny days of childhood were all gone. The garden too where Nature & Art had lavished their choicest gifts converted into a meadow. I thought how changed! and yet how analogous to the fates of those who were once the possessors of it. Changed as it was I felt that in me there were changes quite as great – though spared myself I had seen those cut off who gave to life its every charm. The love that is coeval with our existence "that has grown with our growth & strengthened with our strength

must survive the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds."[1] I perfectly concur with you dear Mary in thinking that sensibility unless it is consecrated to Religion is a far more fruitful source of sorrow than of enjoyment. There is no balm for a wounded spirit in earthly comforts & consolations. Peace has not its origins from *below*, it comes from *above*. *Perishable* is inscribed upon every object in this visible world, from Man down to the humblest insect that sports in the summer breeze.

We heard yesterday of a sudden & melancholy death. Mrs. Neuville the daughter of Mr. William Bulloch & wife of the Episcopal Minister in Savannah.[2] She was tenderly loved by her family & friends and useful in the church, She has left two children – too young to be sensible of the sad bereavement. Oh! how inscrutable & mysterious are the ways of Providence! "His ways are not as our ways and the Judge of all the Earth must do right."[3] What strong faith is necessary to reconcile us to these dark dispensations. We must see the hand of God in them or we could not sustain life under some of them.

Though we feel the unsatisfactory nature of all things temporal yet we need the rod of affliction to wean us from a world which we know is not our rest, and to which we are too prone to fire our affections upon & cling with idolatrous fondness to the creature instead of elevating our affections and placing them supremely upon the creator.

Your visit to West River must have been a delightful one. You think I could have enjoyed the society of your refined and intelligent friends. Your picture of them was truly interesting – but my heart seems steeled against pleasure, and perfectly insensible to the enjoyments of society as much as it was once alive to them. The lines you applied to Miss Mercer are applicable to Mrs. Campbell "Like Ships on Seas, while *in* above the World." You must not think it flattery when I say that Mrs. Campbell continuously reminds me of you – her mind is cast in a different mould from yours, and yet her sentiments are in accordance with yours – her view of life the same – Education & self discipline have done every thing for her mind, it is brilliant by Nature, but pure & elevated, enjoying every thing that is intellectual and bringing Religion to bear upon every thing. Miss Mercer would be delighted to see the influence which her precepts & examples have had upon her former pupil Sarah Campbell – under the direction of almost any other Mother she would have been "a confrere woman of the

world" – She is lovely & attractive and has more conversation than Girls of her age usually possess. She is a Sunday School Teacher & fond of serious reading. I do not know whether she is decidedly pious.

I am happy to hear that your dear Mamma has improved in health & spirits by her visit to her youthful friends – her enthusiasm has clung longer to her than yours & mine. As for me *I feel a hundred* even when I am far removed from the "Housekeepers at home." What was once a transient feeling is now a *settled* one. I do not wonder that you groaned under the wealth & shew of your Baltimore Cousins. Simplicity is a charm both in character & every day living and is compatible with the utmost hospitality & liberality. Every day I value it more & more. Farewell dear Mary – our united regards to all your family & write soon to your ever affectionate Mary

1. Joseph Addison, *Cato: A Tragedy* (London, 1713), 5.1.

2. Mary Martha Neuville, or Neufville, died of a fever on July 5, 1833, at age 24. *Register of Deaths in Savannah*, 5:4.

3. Here Mary Telfair seems to be combining part of Isaiah, 55.8 ("For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways, saith the LORD"), and Genesis, 18.25 ("Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?").

59 SUMMERVILLE, GEORGIA, 28 JULY 1833

I always thought my dear Mary that you possessed humility, and I am confirmed in my opinion by the low estimate you place upon your letters, how highly they are valued by me I will not say – it has been my fate through life never to be able to express half that I feel, yet I do not envy those who possess the *talent* of expressing a great deal more than they feel.

Five weeks have winged their flight since we entered our new residence and to look back it seems five months. Our days are unmarked by incidents, and our present mode of life foreign to what we have been accustomed to. I can only compare it to yours in Sing Sing as regards retirement – the comparison extends no farther, for we have no lofty range of mountains to contemplate, tinged with the crimson hues of sunsett – no dark rolling Hudson to wash with its murmuring waves the base of *our Hill* – all is dreary stillness – except when the Mocking-bird pours forth her Matin song or moonlight serenade, or the watch dog disturbs our slumbers at mid-

night. We are so embosomed in trees that we have not even *a vista* view of our nearest neighbor – but we have pure air and quiet, and I have learned to appreciate these simple blessings. When I first arrived the deep solitude of our situation, connected with painful associations and sleepless nights, made me feverish and wretched. I could not summon *one home feeling* to my aid. The strange portraits that cover the walls, and the melancholy fate of the family who so lately occupied the house, increased my sadness and I wished myself again at my own home whose habit had made objects familiar to me, but now I am better satisfied with this barren hill, than I should be with vine clad France or Classic Italy.

We occupy ourselves with reading, sewing, walking & riding. Sarah keeps house, and every Saturday winds up the decent clock that clicks behind the door. Her health is much improved. Margaret is quilting, Catharine embroidering nankeen mittens for a little child, while I am occupied in making wrappers for summer wear. We read every afternoon. My companion is "Keith on the prophecies," Catharine's "The record of a good Man's life."[1]

I agree with you dear Mary in opinion that "books are far more agreeable companions that the inhabitants of the Sand-hills, with *a very few exceptions*" and I endeavor to *cherish* them as Mrs. Godwin did the clergy.

We have seen very little of Mrs. Campbell[2] lately owing to the unfortunate situation of her sister Mrs. Wheeler whose mind has been very seriously affected by the failure of her husband, who, from immense wealth has been by unfortunate speculations reduced to extreme poverty – her efforts to be cheerful under it, operating upon a feeble frame upsett her mind – how grateful ought we to be, to the juror of all good for the preservation of reason!

On Sunday afternoon I attended Mrs. Campbell's School for black children – it is kept in her wash-room, and she instructs about 45 or 50 blacks – her method is a very happy one which is exemplified in the improvement they have made in the span of two years. She uses the scripture cards and the infant school books, gives a great deal of oral instruction, and teaches them to sing hymns. She has lately enlisted Ann Cumming as a teacher who I think will prove an able coadjutor. Sarah Campbell & Miss Wheeler also assist. Mrs. Campbell possesses a great deal of quiet energy, and like Ann Clay has both a passion and a talent for pouring instruction into the

minds of children. With her own children she commences with the bible and by allowing them to read no story books, they acquire a taste for sacred history. Her benevolence is of the most active character. She keeps a set of bed linen, and ready made garments for the poor, and I have heard from good authority that she goes herself and has them changed and not only administers food for their bodies, but their souls. Such a woman is an Ornament to the Christian profession – how few act up to the requirements of the gospel! She is an Episcopalian and a teacher in the church Sunday School. Sarah Haig says she is equal to a Missionary, and I think so too. I wish you knew her, for she is after your own heart.

I am truly sorry to hear of Mrs. Potters ill health – she has every thing in life to gratify her, but if I am not mistaken she will not be long spared to enjoy those gifts of Providence, which she does not seem to place an undue value upon. Earthly happiness is always incomplete, and infinite wisdom orders it for our benefit – often do I feel inclined to explain with the Psalmist "Oh! that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest."[3]

Cornelia Bond I know very well from character. She united herself to the church three years ago. I rather think a too eager pursuit of pleasure will war against her spiritual improvement.

I do not dear Mary feel that this soil is congenial enough with my taste to admit of my "taking root" upon its barren height. I miss {*illegible*} *exotic* here, as well as elsewhere. I do not wish – {*illegible*} any *spot*, *person*, or *thing* too much. I wish to feel like a Pilgrim and a sojourner below.

I think with you that the afflictions & cares & vexations of this life, would sit very lightly upon us, if we could constantly realize that this is not our home, and that we are rapidly passing on to "a City that hath foundations eternal in the Heavens."[4] Leigh Richmond beautifully remarks that there are three places where the rich & poor meet – the house of prayer – the house appointed for all the living, and "the house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens"[5] – it is in the last only that we can hope to be reunited with those beloved ones who have preceded us on their journey from home and prepared the way for our own departure.

Mrs. John Howard called a fortnight ago to see us. She spoke with great affection of you all and desired when I wrote to send her love. Mrs. Davis too requested to be particularly remembered – she is very fond of Frances.

I have written a very long letter & very minute one to you & have tried to make it a cheerful one. I hope you will return an answer to it of equal length and inform me how you spent your time and what sort of scenery you enjoy what books you are reading – and who are your companions – and how Matilda is passing her time! Indeed I long to hear about you all. We had a visit from an old friend of our family who officiated as Brides Maid to Sarah Jones's Mother (my Aunt) when she talked of Mary Gibbons, it made me feel as if I was living in a past age. Surely there was more Nature in character then than now.

The boarding school education of the present day fritters away originality of mind & good feeling.

We had a visit a few days since from our old friend Mr. Urkhart – the sight of old friends produce mingled feelings of pleasure & pain. Matilda knows Eliza Hunter tell her she is married – that her wedding was a very public one – that she was so overcome as to drop her head upon the Bridegroom's shoulder during the ceremony and at the end of it fainted away & was bourne in the arms of her husband to the sofa.[6] When she recovered, he lifted her veil and kissed her *(between us)* what a scene! But they are both public characters and when *display* is a ruling principle we can never wonder. Truly yours. Mary

1. Alexander Keith, *Evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, derived from the fulfillment of prophecy* (Edinburgh, 1826); Charles B. Taylor, *The Records of a Good Man's Life, et cetera,* 2d ed. (London, 1832).

2. Mrs. Edward F. Campbell.

3. Psalms, 55.6.

4. This is a misquotation of Hebrews 11.10. The original reads as follows: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God."

5. 2 Corinthians, 5.1.

6. This is a reference to the marriage of Eliza Cecil Hunter and John MacPherson Berrien. See also Letter 56.

60 AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, 11 SEPTEMBER [1833][1]

I am happy to find dear Mary that you were so well pleased with the pleasant walks and fine prospects of Orange Spring, and I hope its pure air has strengthened your dear mamma and that she will return to New York

with renovated health. I once visited it with Anne Wallace & thought it a sweet spot to pass a day or two at but not one to awaken a desire to locate at for weeks & months.

I have a sort of feeling inimical to your deserting Park Place. I have spent so many happy hours there during a happy period of life that No. 10 seems like a second home to me – but to be near Frances is a temptation I am sure too strong to be resisted – and I think it unwise in us here "where we have no continuing city"[2] to be attached to any spot. We have all enjoyed very good health thus far except Catharine who is still visited with Head Aches and is now laboring under the influence of one of three days duration. – The heat now is equal to what it was in July, never do I remember so warm a September the period is fast approaching for us to leave here though no Autumnal gales or falling leaves admonish us that Autumn is come. We have not had one genial shower to refresh the parched Earth for one month. The animal as well as the vegitable creation are suffering from the drought. – We have given up our evening rides our only *pastime* until a shower subdue the dust. Sarah enjoys this climate which I find too warm. Her daily routine of duty interests her & I often envy her that disposition to enjoy what is common. Sorrow & disappointment have humbled all aspiring views as regards earthly things, but I do not love drudgery. I commenced *tailoring* and got through with four Waistcoats and was pursuing my *trade* with some ardor when a little Girl who was a former pensioner in Savannah walked three miles to see us – so I resigned the remainder of my Waistcoats to her – Catherine complimented me by saying I would make a good Dorcas. Energy is not a constitutional virtue with me – I must always have incentives for action. – Mr. Cobb (Marys husband) called to see us on his way to Columbia Court House. He is dreadfully changed in his appearance and I think not long for this world – he has a settled cough and I fear is far advanced in a consumption – I believe it was altogether a love match of Mary's side – she seems unconscious of his situation – her child[3] is also very delicate – poor child she has a melancholy prospect before her – so young and so helpless! But I trust that "as her days is, so shall her strength be."[4] Mr. Cobb tells me that Margaret is restless and always desiring a change of scene. She wants resources for the retirement she is in – We invited her to visit us here or to come late in the season & go with us to Savannah. Of this I am determined to let her have her own way and

never to intrude advice, although sensible that she requires a great deal – Her temper is a very peculiar one so peculiar that I think she dislikes every one who endeavors in any way to control her and I have a horror of being hated by any one. – We had a visit a few evenings since from Mrs. Iverson (who was a Forsyth) and Anne Cumming – The two friends seem cast in very different moulds – Mrs. Iversons mind I should say was useful & practical but not above mediocrity – The other I should say possessed a mind uniting uncommon powers of reflection & observation with a lively imagination – She is decidedly the most interesting of her family that I am acquainted with – I trace more of the Clay in her than the Cumming she resembles both Anne & Mrs. Gray. Mrs. Davis is a very fine Woman but she talks *too well* – there is a want of simplicity in her manner & conversation this is (entre nous) she has been very friendly in calling frequently to see us. Anne Cumming seems as deeply impressed with Mrs. Campbells superiority as I am – she even thinks her beautiful – Will you my dear Mary call on Miss Irwin 89 Warren and ask her if she received my letter dated 5th September – Will you request her to send two black crape veils the same shade of the crape bonnetts –

Will you execute a commission for me – send a dozen of Mr. Bethune on the commandments – and two china tablets in the form of pocket books such as you sent Sarah Haig – be so good as to give them to Miss Irwin to put in our box and let me know the cost of them & I will include it in a check which I shall send on to her when I go to Savannah. Accept love from us all Your sincere & affectionate Mary

1. The dating of this letter is indicated by the references to Pierce Cobb's failing health (he died in February 1835) and to Mary Telfair's grandniece Sarah Alberta Addison Alexina Telfair Cobb, who was born in 1833. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 411.

2. Hebrews, 13.14.

3. Her grandniece, usually known as Alberta or Berta.

4. Deuteronomy, 33.25. The original reads "thy days" and "thy strength."

61 SAND HILLS, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, 20 OCTOBER [?1833][1]

Many weeks have elapsed my dear Mary since I last wrote to you, and a fortnight since I received your letter. Two causes have operated to produce silence on my part – sickness and sadness – I took a violent cold three weeks

ago which brought on a severe and obstinate attack of Dysentery, which has deranged my system, and though I am almost as well as usual, find it difficult to get rid of a troublesome cough.

We hope to leave here about 1st of November for Savannah. Every move is painful to me and it is now almost a matter of indifference where I am. – Sarah and Catharine Hunter ought to speak well of the Hill – it has dealt kindly with them – they have both fattened – Margaret too is improved in her appearance, and upon the whole we have notwithstanding the many inconveniences which have clustered around us, been very much pleased with the Sand-hills – Our Land-lady Mrs. Reid was rather *unreasonable* in compelling us to give up her house on 15th – Mr. Campbell acceded to her terms when he engaged it, with the expectation that we would go to his house & remain until it was prudent to return to Savannah, but we declined going in *a body* to a private house, and preferred marooning it and moved into a house lately vacated by Mr. Henry Cumming, which Mrs. Davis expects to occupy for the winter – Our friends here have very kindly sent us Chairs, tables etc so that we are quite comfortable – Catharines last letter from her mother mentioned you particularly – she saw a likeness to me in you – It is not the first time I have heard it, but I think the resemblance much more striking in our tastes, views & feelings than in our faces. Mrs. Campbell is the only person I have ever known that possessed the power of reminding me of you. Sarah Haig is quite an enthusiastic admirer of Mrs. C – she thinks her the most fascinating companion. My admiration is greater for her character than her mind. Sarah's predilection for your Mamma's society and Mrs. Campbells over all others, convinces me that people love their opposites. I find myself every day more & more disposed for seclusion, and I encourage the feeling and am inclined to echo the opinion of Madame De Stael – "Society, society! How it renders the heart hard, and the mind frivolous! *How it makes you live for what people will say of you"!*[2] Those who wish to fit themselves for a better world, ought to have little to do with this. I have commenced Leighton and think him a perfect model of a Christian – his style is as much distinguished by its simplicity & sweetness, as his mind for its elevated purity, and extensive researches – It is delightful to meet with so much humility connected with so much learning and such exalted piety.

I am sorry that your friend Julia Stockton is about making an unsuitable match. My acquaintance with her was slight – she struck me as being

quite a woman of the world with more mind than feeling. – We often see *incongruous* matches turn out the happiest, and there is no *rule* for making people happy – Superiority of intellect is no safe guard to domestic happiness – Sweetness of temper ingenuousness & disinterestedness are the qualities which throw a charm around the domestic circle.

Catharine dined in company with your cousin Mrs. Bostwick at Mrs. Henry's very lately, and admired her beauty – she has not called to see us, her aunt Miss Stoney is very ill, which I suppose has prevented her from calling. Our Canadian fellow Travellers Mr. & Mrs. Henry have been very kind & attentive to us. She is too gay for me and yet she is so amicable that I cannot but hope that the dark clouds of sorrow may never obscure her sunny brow. She is the most popular woman on the Hill. – Mrs. Davis and Anne Cumming come often to see us – The mind of the former seems cast in a mould very similar to Anne Clays – and it is of the finest order of fine minds – *clear*, *strong* & *sprightly* – but I find more sympathy with the latter – she is more *womanly* – and more calculated to interest the feelings.

I do not agree with Anne Wallace in thinking Anne Clays love of every thing *great* will lead her to marry Mr. Ward – If she marries him I shall think it is from affection. She knows him well, and though an unattractive man both in manner and appearance, he is benevolent, and liberal almost to munificence – and he *worships* her – Anne is sufficiently independant in her circumstances not to desire wealth – her habits are simple, and her mind directed to better things than what any worldly distinctions could confer – I do not believe a woman out of No. 10 Park Place could be found more *style proof* than Anne Clay.

Direct your answer to this letter to Savannah where I hope it will meet me – When I seated myself to write to you it was with a view of sending a very long letter to you, but a head-ache compels me to curtail it – Have you determined to continue in Park Place or will Frances lure you to Washington Square – Tell me all your plans –

With *best love* to your Mamma & Matilda, in which Catharine, Sarah & Margaret unite I remain ever your affectionate Mary

1. The placement of this letter is suggested by Mary Telfair's reference to the visit of Pierce Cobb.

2. It has proved impossible to locate the source of this quotation in Mme de Staël's work.

62 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 18 MARCH 1834

It is a long time my dear Mary since I have received a letter from you – You had just recovered from a severe cold when you last wrote to me & I hope you have not had a recurrence of it – Did you receive my letter with Sarah Cecil's commission? I wrote a short time previous to that and this will be my third since I received yours –

I have lately witnessed a great deal of affliction in the family of Mrs. Hunter, who you saw last summer – Poor Wimberly,[1] whose health for many years past has been wretched, within a few weeks past exhibited strong marks of insanity and at last put a period to his existence – You can conceive the agony of grief this awful event has occasioned among near & dear relatives. – His wife is inconsolable – his Mother bowed down by it, and poor Catharine who loved him very dearly is in the deepest sorrow. Friends can afford no consolation – religion can alone support them under this most severe trial.

How much is there to humble us in the frailties of human Nature! and how truly grateful ought we to be to the giver of every good and perfect gift for the preservation of Reason. I believe Wimberly to have been a sincere Christian, and I trust that he is now a happy spirit in a world where changes are unknown, and where sin & sorrow never enter.

If we did not frequently meditate upon our own short & uncertain existence here, and realize our connexion with the world of spirits we could not under some trials bear the burthen of existence. Every thing here seems dark & mysterious – there is no resting place for the affections upon Earth and yet how prone are we to expect comfort from the creature. We need continued admonitions to remind us that this is not our Home, and that perishable is inscribed upon all terrestrial objects.

I suppose you have (through the Wallaces) heard of the death of Mr. Thos. Cummings – I hear his end was a peaceful & happy one. His loss will be deeply felt by some numbers of his family – His Wife & daughters seemed to be devotedly attached to him & I expect he was very exemplary in all his domestic relations.

How often are we called upon to remark melancholy events succeeding joyous ones – But a few days previous to his fathers death Joe Cumming's marriage was celebrated in great style. He is married to a french Protestant, and I hear a fine Woman – I think his respectability will be promoted by it.

Your Mamma's friend Mrs. Richd. Habersham is quite a new character since Kitty came out she seems to have renewed her youthful feelings and (between us) ought to have deferred writing her memoirs until the present period. Margaret L. is still with us – I am glad to see her cheerful & happy but I could never go my life over in hers. My interest in the world *can never, never be revived*

I promised to let you know when we {*illegible*} our plans for the summer – I am ashamed to acknowledge *even to you* my *confessor*, that my energies are so benumbed that I have a horror of moving – Some of our friends recommend us to go to New Port – and try the benefit of sea bathing and riding – Even our short removal last summer gave us so much trouble that I hardly know whether it is worth while making efforts even for health. Do you think you would be willing to go to New Port with us? if we decide upon going there we shall sail for New York early in June.

Sarah Cuthbert is still here – her son is quite a wonder – he talks like a man & acts like a child – she returns to her solitude in April I think she is happy with a man that could have made no other woman so – Write soon and give our love to all – Truly yours

1. Wimberley Hunter, Catharine Hunter's brother.

63 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 8 APRIL 1834

Thank you dear Mary for the caps and their accompaniment which were received a week since. The Belle seems to glide over the waves with great rapidity, I feel half disposed to make her my Post Office. I have seated myself several times to write to you but felt so dull that I could not get beyond three or four lines. I try to *force* an interest in my former occupations but find them all *joyless* indeed my interest in life decreases daily. I have just finished reading the "memoirs of Mrs. Cowper"[1] – her diary & letters are very interesting – she often brought you to my mind her view of life and her sentiments bear a striking resemblance to yours – Her letters to Mr. Cowper previous to her marriage are a perfect model of their kind – the frankness with which she acknowledged her faults, combined with the ardent piety and perfect simplicity which breathe in every line makes them delightful – she thinks with you that a religious woman ought not to marry a man who is not decidedly a Christian – she seems to have enjoyed that assurance of

faith so rarely felt, but I could not enter into her ideas of Christian perfection on Earth – The Methodists generally think that perfection may be attained here – they certainly have more enjoyment in religion than any other sect – Mrs. Cowper says that "letter writing is one of the sweets of celibacy." So that we may infer that married people take no pleasure in epistolary intercourse. – You & I cannot plead the duties of married life as an excuse for our correspondence languishing – I have certainly made great efforts to revive it, and if you are as diligent we shall soon have long confabs upon paper – We received a visit yesterday from an Albany Lady who is acquainted with the Bridgens – she says they are so happy in Florence that they think of making it their future residence – If they dislike the sea as much as I do and have no near ties in America they are right to stay there. Anna is so enterprising and so independant that she can push her way in a foreign land better than a timid character could at home, and yet I do not envy her – she was evidently unhappy except when excited by conversation. My veneration for intellect is quite on the decline – unless talent can be made useful it is of very little account. –

Sarah Cuthbert spent yesterday with us she is devoted to her child who is uncommonly intelligent but very awkward – she has educated him entirely herself and he does her great credit. His father objects to *much* religious instruction and the little fellow takes the deepest interest in the Sunday School and is attending church. He has fine qualities and if his ardor is properly directed will make an uncommon man. He professes (between you & I) all the peculiarities of his race an excitability bordering upon frenzy – I am sorry that poor Sarah is doomed to such an exile from those she loves – but I think she is happy she quotes from him continually which is a proof {*illegible*} respect to his opinions and the most *unlovable* man can always find some one to love him. – I was shocked to see Mr. Joyce's death announced in a late paper he has made a happy change for he seemed fully prepared for the felicity of Heaven – his was a pure spirit but one that seemed to find little rest here.

As it is late & all retired for the night I wish [to] bid you an abrupt & reluctant adieu – Love to your Mamma your affectionate Mary

1. Possibly a reference to William Hayley, *The Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper, Esq.*, 3 vols. (Chichester and London, 1803–1806).

64 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 29 APRIL [1834][1]

I have made several efforts to answer your brief but kind letter dear Mary without success. I feel so depressed that I cannot bear to take my pen into my hand – I know that it is wrong to yeild to this feeling but every thing is an effort and life itself at times irksome – I know that I have many more blessings than I deserve and have been supported through a trial as great as human nature can sustain – still there are periods of mental suffering which nothing can mitigate. – I have endeavored to cultivate a spirit of resignation, and strive to look beyond this troubled Earth for comfort here every thing is cheerless – unsatisfying I have long found it to be – but I will not my dear Mary intrude my sorrows any longer upon you whose sympathies I know I have in all my sufferings & trials.

We are now quite alone Catharine Hunter left us in consequence of the illness of her Mother and Sarah Cecil was called home by the indisposition of her Sisters younger children – I have read more since they left us and sewed less – I have just finished Lady Russells letters, the style of them is rather too quaint for my taste, but her character which almost every line developes must have been a very lovely one, and her views of religion so elevated, her foretaste of Heaven so pure and simple, that it was difficult to realize that one so deeply involved in the affairs of the world and whose high rank compelled her to mingle with the vain & frivolous could have attained to such a state of christian perfection.[2] – I have made several attempts to read "the life of a good Man" but found it too exciting. I will read it some time hence[3] – I find that at present but one sort of reading suits me – that which is addressed more to the mind than the feelings.

We deeply regret dear Mary that we cannot be with you this summer – The inconveniences attending leaving home seems so great – We have no one to depend upon, and you know it is a great distance to go – we have no enterprize and our feelings revolt at the idea of throwing ourselves in any way upon strangers – Our experience you know is very bitter on that subject, but we need lessons of that sort to teach us the necessity of leaning on something stronger than an arms of flesh.

We shall either remain in Savannah, or take a house on the Sand hills near Augusta if we can procure one ready furnished. It is considered a healthy retreat and there we can have our own domestics and be as retired as we choose the greatest inducement for going there is the facility with

which it may be accomplished – no land travelling and no ocean to traverse. We shall have the society of Mrs. Edward Campbell who *though not Mary Few* I value very highly – She is one who sympathises deeply with the afflicted and is more frequently to be found in the haunts of poverty & distress than in scenes of (what the gay & thoughtless call) pleasure.

I now more than ever regret the distance which separates us from the friends we love – but I trust that if our lives are spared that we shall meet again – We feel very anxious about my Cousin Margaret, her health continues to decline no climate now seems to benefit her.

Sarah could not reconcile the idea of your being *flurried* – so much for having a high character – If you lived at the South you would be flurried every day for "a waveless calm" is unknown in this region and yet our friends tell us we lead a life of greater ease than any one in the place. It is very desirable to be able to perform our duties and yet make light of cares – I never wish to be annoyed by trifles, and yet "trifles make the sum of human life"[4] – which may well be called a warfare – every thing has its snares – the very best feelings of our natures too often mislead us, and the more we look into our own hearts the more willing ought we to be to make excuses for others – still how prone we are to censure, forgetful of our own imperfections and forgetful {*illegible*} this world so fair and beautiful was ruined {*illegible*} sinful Man. – I heard a beautiful sermon yesterday by Mr. Preston his text was "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"[5] he dwelt more upon the mercies than the judgments of God, he spoke most touchingly of the ravages committed by the scarlet fever, which is now desolating some of the towns & villages in the interior of our state the reflections produced by his sermon recalled to my mind those beautiful lines of Heber

> "Death rides on every passing breeze,
> He lurks in every flower,
> Each season has its own disease,
> Its peril every hour!"[6]

If we could only realize that we are under the guardianship of Providence always, we might rest secure amidst pestilence & peril, but we are so short sighted that we require to be continually reminded of our dependence upon him who is the arbiter of our destinies as well as the ruler of the Universe –

When I commenced writing I felt as if I could not finish one page and I have written three – Love to your Mamma & Matilda your ever affectionate Mary. Mary Telfair, now Mrs. Cobb has a daughter – do write soon and a long letter.

1. The date of this letter is suggested by Mary Telfair's reference to the birth of her grandniece Alberta in 1833.

2. Lady Rachel Vaughan Russell, *Lady Russell's Letters* (London, 1819).

3. Probably Charles B. Taylor, *The Records of a Good Man's Life* (London, 1832).

4. Amelia Alderson Opie (1769–1853), *Adeline Mowbray, Or, The Mother and Daughter: A Tale in Three Volumes* (London, 1805), 3:59.

5. Lamentations, 3.39

6. Reginald Heber, "At a Funeral," No. I.

65 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 23 MAY 1834

I will dear Mary make an effort to get this letter to you by the Steam Packet according to your request. I am very stupid and not even the birds which are singing around me can brighten my dull mind – I have been troubled with a bad cough for the last fortnight which I cannot trace to the same cause that I did last Autumn, *an open House* – Margaret says, "when you get with Mary Few you will be quite well," We expect to sail about 1st of June in company with Dr. & Mrs. Jones – the former has engaged the Cabin of the Celia which is hourly expected. We consider it a *positive* comfort to be in company with them – She is truly excellent and improves upon acquaintance. A woman who trains her children to consider others more than themselves must possess qualities of a high order – I rate a Woman according to her *capacity* for training her children for two worlds – It is a very difficult task, and I cannot but admire Mrs. Jones's attention to the most minute circumstance relating to them – nothing is neglected – Some Mothers attend only to the morals, some to the minds alone – while others think only of the bodies but she unites *soul mind & body* in her compass of duties – I sometimes think she would have kept a good boarding school.

Mrs. Telfair & her children left us a day or two since – Margaret left Savannah with great regret – she has an aversion to the up-Country.[1] I gave her a letter of advice how to pass her time & a list of books to read but Pleasure is so much her idol at present that I fear she will laugh & sing the

hours away. – How completely certain traits of Character descend – it may be the influence of example but I trace much of Mrs. Telfairs mother & herself in Margaret – and only one solitary trait of her Father & that is the love of variety and eagerness of disposition – with him it was interesting for it was not in the pursuit of trifles – Margaret is too much puffed & flattered & it will be her ruin – few youthful minds can resist the syren song of flattery and she receives it from both Sexes – I cannot divest myself of great anxiety respecting her more of this when we have a *confidential* talk.

I hope little Mary has entirely recovered from the effects of the scarlet fever.[2] I am sorry you are not nearer to Frances, for it must be a journey for you to take on foot – I hope Matilda's happiness will increase with increasing years – she is truly fortunate to possess the confidence of her husband & the affections of his children. We ought to value happiness when we possess it for every thing on earth is valueless compared with domestic happiness – Men may fly from an *unlovely* home, while a Woman is *chained* to it.

I believe I have not mentioned to you the engagement of Geo. Jones to Miss Gardner of Maine – she is of the *House of Tudor* a *fair* branch of it – she is said to be pious, amiable and intelligent – interesting in her appearance without being pretty. I am glad he has made so judicious a choice for he is a most deserving young man. Love to all Truly yours Mary

1. The "Mrs. Telfair" referred to here is Mary Telfair's sister-in-law, Margaret. "Margaret" is Mary Telfair's niece, Margaret Long Telfair.

2. Mary Few Chrystie.

66 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 1 JUNE [1834][1]

Your letter dear Mary arrived in six days from New York, what a wonderful creation of Man is the Steam Packet! and yet I would rather go to sea the *old fashioned* way – I am now an advocate for *old fashions* and if it did not look *miserly* I should be unwilling to relinquish an old garment for a new one – This feeling is peculiarly strong with me as regards friendship – I have one *old* friend who has great peculiarities, they never come across me, simply because I have been intimate with her for years – My veneration for the *antique* pervades every thing – *Ships excepted* – old people if they are not morose and their feelings continue unchilled by the

frost of age, are a thousand times more interesting to me than young ones – I never expect to reach what is termed old age, but if it should be the will of Providence to protract my days I hope the mental infirmities of age will not seize me with their ruthless grasp. – I have seen more of very young persons this winter than for years past owing to Margaretta being with us, and I must say either the world has changed or I have been *asleep*.[2] I have listened with amazement to their opinions – so much calculation and worldly knowledge – They begin life with more of a *certain sort of prudence* than some end it – perhaps they are happier for it, they build no Castles of Romance to be dissolved like Catharines Palace of Jus – I think with Mrs. Jamieson that "there are young persons now a days, but no such thing as youth"[3] – The bloom of existence is sacrificed to a fashionable education and where we should find the rose-buds of spring, we only see the full blown precocious roses of the hot-bed. There is something inexpressibly *delightful to me in single hearted disinterestedness*, even if *martyrdom* should be the result of it when I meet with *unalloyed sincerity* I *almost* worship it – Self seems to be the predominating principle with most people – you know like yourself I have been shielded from contact with the world, lately I have been obliged to act as well as think and it appears as if a film had been removed from my eyes – I have come to another conclusion that the high toned in character has passed away – Margaret & myself were looking over old papers this morning (a sad occupation) from some letters addressed to my father I gained an insight into some of the characters of Hero's & Statesmen of old – I was perfectly delighted with one of Patrick Henry's it combined so much, talent, integrity and enthusiasm – He must have been a delightful being, fitted for both public and private life. I have always found that the truly great in real life seize upon the imagination with a stronger hold than all the fine spun characters of romance. – My memory dear Mary which I have sometimes been a little proud of has failed me – I cannot remember our Willow Tree in Broad way under whose shade we must have sported so often – It is the only land mark that time has obliterated from the tablets of my memory. Your kind invitation we fully appreciate – we will settle matters when we meet without *sacrificing the principle*. I long to see you – The Celia has not arrived and it will be the 10th of June before we sail I have learned to say it is well – though Sarah & Margaret only yesterday accused me of being too sanguine – They accuse me too of being

superstitious & like {*illegible*} Hester Stanhope in one respect – she says destiny keeps her in Arabia – and that I think it is my destiny to live in Georgia.[4]

Poor Sarah Cuthbert looks wretchedly ill she leaves here on Monday for her home – The label is again required. She looks very formidable and has reason to dread *the ides* of September I hope for her sake it will be a daughter The Father will have less to do with it – I hope it will be exclusively the mothers. We have not heard from our relatives since they left us Mary's health improved while here. Margaretta shewed more feeling at leaving Savannah than I expected. She had every thing she desired but company at home – however she was constantly out so that our domestic dullness did not affect her. – I wrote to you by the Steam Packet did you get my letter? affectionately yours Mary

1. The date of this letter is indicated by the state of Sarah Cuthbert's health. She died within a matter of weeks. See Letter 68.

2. Here Mary Telfair is referring to her niece, Margaret Long Telfair.

3. This quotation almost certainly comes from a work by Anna Brownwell Jameson (1794–1860) but is not to be found – even in a misremembered form – in her most celebrated publication, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (London, 1838).

4. Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope (1776–1839), the daughter of Charles Stanhope, Third Earl Stanhope, became well known as the hostess of her uncle, William Pitt. She traveled widely, particularly in the Middle East, and died in virtual poverty at her villa of Djoun, near Sidon, in Lebanon.

67 NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, 7 JULY 1834

I cannot imagine my dear Mary what has become of my letter to you – it has been written long enough for me to receive an answer to it – Yesterday I welcomed yours, and am inclined from the failure of my first to make a second effort to hold "communion sweet" with you – I feel dear Mary that I have lost the power of *"winding up"* (any thing but a skein of worsted) and I may add of being *wound up*. I must now answer your question *What are you carrying on?* – I carry my frame (which is increasingly in *bulk*) twice a day to walk – Every green land and street in New Port has been explored, and my interest in surrounding scenes, which are eminently beautiful is a *growing* one – We took a drive two evenings since

to the fort – the road was extremely rough, and rocky, but the prospect wild and picturesque beyond description – on one side lay the bay with its unruffled waters dotted with Islands and the Town of New Port looking like a City rising from the waves – On the other side was the boundless ocean – the view of the breakers recalled *the rapids and the noble St. Laurence* with which Mary Few is ever associated.

We have not suffered one hour from heat since we left New York – We occupy two rooms communicating with each other, without a chimney to ventilate them, both united smaller than one of our bed rooms at home, and yet we have not even a crevice left in a window to admit the night air which is the highest encomium I can pass upon the climate, which is unparalleled for purity of air. Our fare is very plain, and good, and our appetites are so *noble* that we require no delicacies to stimulate them – We are more retired than at home and pursue reading and working without interruption. We *live* in our little parlour, from the window of which we catch a view of the bay, and the setting sun. I have finished one Taboret[1] which recompenses me for the trouble and has been a source of deep interest. – I have made very little progress in Hall, but have read the corner stone nearly through.[2] Mary Gray was a Pupil of the Author, from her Mothers account of her she must be a very superior girl and anxious to devote herself to usefulness – she is to pass next winter with her Aunt Anne – she could not have a finer example. What *all the world* thinks would be so suitable, *ought to be*. If I was a Catholic I should solicit absolution from my Priest for *daring* to *plan* the match when I read Mrs. W's obituary notice – It was unfeeling, but human nature is prone to err. I think Dr. W . . . d's mind and *soul* would be more to Anne, than *the Palace* of Mr. W with all its luxurious and *troublesome* etceteras. I think the only happiness in this life springs from congeniality of thought, *feeling* and *principle*. Sarah Cecil would have *luxuriated* here, for we have been to church two successive evenings – last night we heard dear good Mr. Cutler, who gave a delightful discourse his text "Woe to them who are at ease in Zion."[3]

There is convocation in the Episcopal church here – service held three times a day – This evening we intend going to Mr. Dumonts lecture. I prefer him to any preacher I ever heard, Mr. Kollock excepted.

On our way to church last evening we met Mr. Bayard who informed us of the death of our old friend Judge Johnson – he died under a surgical

operation – he refused to have his limbs bound with cords and the efforts he made to bear up under his agony was so great that nature was exhausted.[4] I fear he was too much absorbed in the enjoyment of ambition and society, to reflect upon a future state, He was certainly a gifted being, and more calculated from the brilliancy of his intellect, and the native unaffected elegance of his person and manners to adorn society than any man I ever saw – calculated too for domestic life in all its relations, but alas! – What are those gifts at the close of life? As Cowper says the only "lasting treasure is Truth." I heard through Mrs. Gray that the Wallaces were at Long Branch Eliza Clay thinking she might be useful accompanying them there – no material change had taken place in the health of the latter. I feel much for them all – Tom Clay seemed to think the air of New Port would have proved more beneficial.

I have lately been reading a very interesting little work Elimer Castle,[5] a Catholic story – it is beautifully written, and I think would interest you. I am sorry to hear of the cause which drove Frances to Rockaway, whicb strikes me as a most uninteresting spot. I wrote to her about a week after my arrival here. Mr. Robt. Habersham & family are to be here in tomorrows steam boat – how I wish you were their *Compagnon de voyage*! I should hail them with redoubled pleasure. As we generally think alike on most subjects, I am sure your opinion of New Port and its lovely environs would correspond with mine for I prefer it to any spot I have ever visited *Quebec* not excepted. – As I wish to put this in the office I *must* tear myself away. Did I mention to you that my old friend Mrs. Gray came to see us and invited us to visit her in Boston, but we are too strong a party for a private house, and if we went would patronise the Tremont Hotel – Nothing but your going would induce me to revisit it. Travelling and new scenes have no *power* to change me now & I find I have lost my *taste* for the society even of agreeable people – To your Mamma & Matilda give our united love and answer this immediately. Your affect. Mary. Elliott Habersham is here. If Richd, comes this way he would be a good escort to bear you to us

1. A taboret is a kind of stool. It is likely that Mary Telfair was making an embroidered cover for a stool, rather than a stool itself.

2. Probably references to the Rev. John Foster, *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall. With a brief memoir, and a sketch of his literary character, by Sir J. Mackintosh, and a sketch of his character as a theologian and a preacher* (New York, 1833), and Jacob Abbott, *The Corner*

Stone, or, A Familiar Illustration of the Principles of Christian Truth (Boston and New York, 1834).

3. Amos, 6.1. The original reads, "that are at ease in Zion."

4. William Johnson (1771–1834), a South Carolinian who was an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

5. *Elimer Castle: a Roman Catholic Story of the Nineteenth Century* (Boston, 1833), first published in Dublin in 1827.

68 NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, 1 AUGUST 1834

I have been so distressed my dear Mary in consequence of the sad intelligence I received from Georgia a week since, that it has deterred me from writing to you. A letter from Sarah Campbell informed me of the death of Sarah Cuthbert. Although from the state of her health such an event ought to have been expected, still it was a great shock and as much to Mrs. Campbell as it was to us. She took her usual ride the day before, and merely complained of pain, she was dressed and sitting up when Mrs. Campbell entered – the pain increased and a premature birth was the result – the infant had expired previous to its birth – all seemed to be well with her, until she was attacked with a convulsion and continued insensible for half an hour, and then breathed her last. Poor Sarah I trust she is happy now – hers was a meek and humble spirit, and life independent of her child had few attractions to her – a dark cloud seemed to hang over her earthly destiny, but sorrow and disappointments when viewed through a proper medium, are purifiers of the soul, and prepare it for "an house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens."[1]

I hope her loss and the manner of her will make a serious impression upon him. I believe he has strong feelings, and if any event in his life could make him feel the necessity of resting his hopes upon something higher than this troubled state of existence it is this sad dispensation of Providence. Poor little Alfred![2] What a prospect is his so early to be deprived of a tender Mothers care. I almost dread hearing of Uncle Jones in his feeble state of health to bear up under such a weight of sorrow will be very hard.

Your letter is only the second *treat* we have had at New Port. The first was a visit from Mrs. Gray she heard of our being here while she was on a visit to Providence and came accompanied by Tom Clay[3] & Mr. Arnold[4] to see us, she staid a day and a half – we took a walk and a ride together, and talked until I was *exhausted*. She is a most improved character. She was

always lovely and attractive but now Religion has given the finishing touch to her character. I know no one who seems more strongly imbued with the true spirit of piety than she is, and more desirous of seeing those around her striving to attain "the one thing needful."[5]

We had a long and delightful visit from Mr. Cutler today. He thinks with me that a love of literature is very hostile to high religious attainment & thinks Robert Hall[6] has much to contend with on that point and that his religion was more that of intellect than feeling.

We had a visit from Mr. Ward who *looks* as if he had been *maltreated* in an affair of the heart. Ann Clay's *natural* cruelty has been productive of much misery.

We wish for you every day, and I think if you were the companion of our rambles you would soon conquer Dispepsia. We *pedestrianize* twice a day, and have *ferretted* out every great lane, and fine prospect in New Port, and its lovely environs. Mr. Schroeder's Cottage would realize your *beau* ideal of rural taste and beauty – nothing can transcend the bright verdure of the grass here – it is *emerald green* which carpetted Eden before our first Parents ate the fatal apple. The fogs and saline air nourish its growth, and the frequent absence of sun vivifies it. The rides about this Island are beautiful, and the Ocean is visible from almost every point. The harbour too presents a scene of picturesque beauty. In our drive this morning we had the rich variety of hill & dale and cultivated fields, and flocks & herds reposing in the latter – on one side of us, and on the other the beautiful bay whose unruffled water looked like a mirror. The town is not devoid of interest to the admirers of the *antique*. The number of its old mansions *respectable even in ruins* awaken a mysterious sort of interest and I often stop the little boys to enquire "who lives there." The house in which Mrs. Bayard boards was once occupied by Genl. Washington. And the house in which Mrs. Evans lives was once owned by a cousin of Mrs. Anciaux – a great belle in her day and now reduced to beggary – chiefly supported from the crumbs that fall from the table of the house she once called her own – what an evidence of the mutability of fortune – Riches indeed have "wings, and grandeur is a dream."[7] Who can number many years without being painfully sensible of the emptiness and variety of all things terrestrial, *particularly* when they see those who trod with them "lifes early vale" suddenly arrested by the hand of death! It is a solemn admonition to us and ought not to pass un-

heeded by. The premature simplicity of this place would suit your taste, and every day I observe to my Sisters "Mary Few would admire this." *Simplicity* & *Antiquity* are stamped upon this unenterprising place. I should like to introduce you to *the old tower* which tradition says was in the olden times a refuge for Buccaneers – it stands in the centre of a verdant field and only wants the creeping ivy to give it the aid of a classic ruin, Sarah Cecil expects to pass a week with us en passant to Boston. She says her time is spent in her own chamber at Saratoga – her health is still very bad. Love to your Mamma & Matilda and write soon to your affectionate Mary Sarah sends love & says when the spirit again moves her, she will write to you. It requires as much to make her wield the pen, as for an old Soldier "to draw his rusty blade from the scabbard."[8] She thinks New Port air has invigorated her faculties and an essay or poem may be the result – if atmosphere fosters genius.

1. 2 Corinthians, 5.1.

2. Alfred Cuthbert, the twelve-year-old son of Sarah Gibbons Cuthbert and Alfred Cuthbert.

3. Thomas Savage Clay (1801–1849) was Anne Clay's brother. He ran the family plantation in Bryan County and shared his sister's interest in the religious instruction of enslaved people. He was the author of *Detail of a Plan for the Moral Improvement of Negroes on Plantations, Read before the Georgia Presbytery* (Printed at the Request of the Presbytery, 1833). Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 417.

4. Mr. Arnold is probably Richard Dennis Arnold. Born in Savannah in 1808, he was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1839 and to that state's Senate in 1842. He then served four terms as mayor of Savannah, 1842–1864. He died in Savannah in 1876.

5. Luke, 10.42 is the most likely source of this quotation.

6. Probably Robert Hall, A.M, pastor of the Church at Broadmead, Bristol, England.

7. Cowper, *The Task*, 3:261.

8. Possibly an adaptation of Ezekiel, 21.3, "Behold, I arm against thee and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath," or ibid., 21.4, "Therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath."

69 NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, 20 AUGUST 1834

I am glad to find my dear Mary that you have not exchanged rural quiet, friendship, books for the noise and bustle of the Metropolis. We feel

quite at home in New Port – its green lanes are daily trodden by us, and we continue to admire the beautiful turf which seems independant of dews and showers for its enchanting verdure. Sarah & Margaret are as much pleased with this emerald isle as I am – we all equally admire the beauties of cultivated nature. I feel no inclination to become permanently a New Englander, but if my lot had been cast in it I believe I should not have been a stranger to *local attachment*. Every thing is primitive here – the houses, the people, furniture, dress etc etc.[1] I strolled into Trinity Church yesterday afternoon – the most ancient Church in New Port – It is as large as the cathedral in Quebec. The organ has the crown upon it, and was presented upwards of a century ago to the church – The monuments bear equally the stamp of antiquity, some are crumbling in ruins, while the hand of time has effaced the inscriptions from others – We regret daily that you are not with us – we should be in our deep seclusion in the midst of a great hotel, enjoy your society *too much* – The sound of distant voices reach our ears, and often conversations (if mere chattering can be dignified by that appellation). I feel no inclination to cultivate the acquaintance of any one who has called, except Mrs. Dr. Hare who is a charming woman – She has both talent & character and is passing a few weeks at a farm house near the second beach. The daughter is a lovely girl of 16 and though possessed of every advantage that this world offers is from her peculiar education as artless as a cottager, and yet her conversation is as intelligent as that of a well read woman of thirty. – I heard yesterday from George Jones, he went immediately to his grandfather when the sad intelligence was received of his melancholy bereavement. At first the shock was very great, and his grief deep – but he was composed and resigned when George left him – he feels it a duty to be so – and he feels too that his pilgrimage is near its end. How many buoyant hearts he has lived to see the clods of the valley press upon! – Harriette Campbell writes me that little Alfred returned with his father to Jaspar[2] – I hope he will be sent away to school – any situation would be better for him than the one he is now in – His mother to him is an irreparable loss, for she was devoted to him. I never think of the poor little fellow without those lines of Savage occurring to me "No mothers tender care, shielded my infant innocence with prayer."[3] Louisa McAllister burst in upon us two days since – she has left four of her children with the faithful Rosanna – I think her family err in carrying her to the north – it increases the natural

restlessness of her disposition. I trace it to her marrying without a *guarantee sufficient* of love. – A woman cannot love her husband *too much* – affection is such a safeguard such an incentive to the performance of duties. If I was a man I should *fathom* the heart of a woman well before I ventured to call her mine – There is so little *strength* and *depth* in attachments.

Mrs. Ben Cutler paid us a visit yesterday – she is uncommonly able and intelligent – a delightful companion without any vivacity of mind – she always reminds me of Mrs. Edward Campbell – Nature seems to have cast them in the same benevolent mould – steady principle seems to actuate them both, and religion seems to be interwoven in their natures. I give her credit for *steering* her own course among so uncongenial a *crew* – she has a kindred spirit in her husband, who is *lovely* and *loveable*. Since I parted from you Mrs. Cutler is the only being I have been thrown with that my heart has expanded towards, and who could inspire me with animation enough for a *tete a tete*. Miss Goddard is staying at a farm house near the Cutlers – all the choicest spirits go to Farm houses. What think you of her for Mr. Ward? he is so devoted to the intellectual that a transfer of affection in these *transferring* times, might not be an Herculean labor. I regret to hear of Lizzy's situation I was sure the air of Long Branch would not prove efficacious in her complaint. I feel more for her family than for her – "When such friends part 'tis the survivor dies"[4] – They have all except Joe arrived at a period of life, when new hopes and new affections cannot be re-kindled but they have *hopes* beyond this fleeting transient state of existence, and those who can fully realize that they are travelers on the road to Eternity view their sorrows and afflictions as momentary compared with others who rest upon the things of time & desire for all their happiness. The appearance of the cholera in New York will prevent our return to it as early as we intended. We think of accompanying Mr. & Mrs. Robt. Habersham to Boston for a few days, not before September. They are now at Saratoga & expect to visit Niagara previous to their return to New Port. Sarah Cecil writes me that her only pleasure consists in going to church and attending Mr. Griswold's evening prayers. I expect the people here take us for fanatics – seeing Mrs. Cutler step in so often and Mr. Ward a member of the temperance society – Mr. Dumont the Presbyterian minister has been to see us – he is very agreeable and I think if our church in Savannah was vacant he would exactly suit it. – Margaret desires me to inform you that Mr.

Stewarts *Compagnon du voyage threatens* to pay us a visit. After his visit to the *ducal Castle,* he would feel *pinioned* in our *lilliputian* parlour – which has quite *a cottage air*; the only luxury it boasts is a sofa, not unlike that celebrated by our much loved Bard – and we have curtains too that wave gracefully in the breeze – We only want a friend or two to illumine its dark walls with *"the flow of soul"*[5] – To your Mamma & Matilda our affectionate regards – I received a letter from Frances a week since with a characteristic sketch of her fellow lodgers – I intend answering it as soon as I get from *"under the weather."* Write soon a long letter filled with *cogitations*. I will wait for it before I write again. Truly yours.

1. Mary Telfair was writing at a time before Newport became the summer resort of the super-rich (largely during the second half of the nineteenth century), who built enormous mansions coyly referred to as "cottages."

2. Jasper County, Georgia.

3. This is a line from Richard Savage's poem *The Bastard*, which was published in London and Dublin in 1728.

4. It is unclear where and when Mary Telfair came across this phrase, which with variations appeared on some early nineteenth-century tombstones. A slightly different version, "when such a man from earth departs, 'Tis the survivor dies," occurs in a short poem by George Pope Morris, "In memory of John W. Francis, Jr." This poem may be found on The Project Gutenberg Etext of Poems, by George P. Morris. This text is to be found at www.dominiopublico.gov.br/download/texto/gu002558.pdf.

5. Alexander Pope, *Imitations of Horace*, 2.1. The full citation reads "The feast of reason and the flow of soul."

70 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 11 DECEMBER 1834

A rainy day my dear Mary usually invites to letter writing, and though my mood is far from bright, I cannot resist the invitation of clouds & rain to enjoy your society. It is a long time since your letter arrived, so long that I have been *hoping* for another. Two or three days since I wrote to Frances. I was very stupid and every day feel it an increasing malady. Cares & the drudgery of life do not brighten the faculties. We have even (by the death of our Horses) been deprived of our daily drives, and I find "*Shanks* Mare" could convey me a long distance on the pave but fails sadly over Savannah sands.

We have patronized the young artist Richard,[1] which gives us a daily walk to his room. Sarah's portrait is complete & pronounced a good likeness. Margarets will be, but he cannot catch my ugly phiz after five sittings he crated mine, and commenced another, which looks so cross that I flatter myself it is unlike me. Sarah says mine is no face for Painting – too much I suppose of *abstraction* & *distraction* in it. You have made quite an impression upon the artist – to use his own phrase "Miss Mary Few realizes my *beau ideal* of female character if she had been some years younger or I some years older I should have been captivated by her." I need not say he took the *broad* road to my heart by his commendations, which I am certain will not please you as much as they did me.

I am going to give the little history I promised upon my bill of lading. A month since Miss Bordley of Baltimore brought a letter of introduction to me from her Aunt Mrs. Gibson of Philadelphia for whom I have the highest respect & admiration. The ostensible object of her visit here was to teach music. I wrote to Margaret to come & enlist as a Pupil, which was all I could do *in that line*. I invited her to tea & dinner the former invitation was accepted, the latter rejected. I sat two hours with her on Tuesday morning listening to her *fine sentiments* & *fine language,* on Friday I heard that the following morning she was to plight her faith at the Altar of the Catholic Church to a Mr. Ramsbottom, a *low irishman* whose wife was killed last winter by being thrown from her gig.[2] An hour after the ceremony was performed he bore her off in his own little sloop of which he is the *commander* to an uninhabited Island where he dwells as *Light house keeper*. What a rash act on her part! What an era we live in for *matrimonial exploits*! If I was not too *refined* I might quote Mrs. Francis's remark – certain it is that there is a *Talisman* in an introduction to us. Our protégé Miss Mayhew who was a Teacher of *Music* forged a matrimonial chain for Dr. Cunningham of Augusta.

Now Mrs. Oconnor weighs heavily upon our minds.[3] You recollect Mrs. McAllister brought her out from *pure compassion*. We have provided her with an asylum across the street in the House of Dyer – an Irish widow *with an only son*. We are to furnish her with food & to have her washing done & she is to work to pay for her room & 2 dolls. P. month. She ought to lay by 10 dollars a month at least. I intend giving her *wholesome* advice – she is so full of romanced poetry that I fear she will look upon me as a

calculating monster. She is much given to "*the melting moods*"[4] and is a *facsimile* of Miss Powell. I have been weaving in the *Loom* of fancy as brilliant a destiny for her as your Mother did for Peggy, instead of *a Fountain* I have pitched upon a Son of Erin who happens to be her Landlord – some "*white winged messenger*"[5] whispers in my ear that he will elevate "*the lovely* pale Oconnors child" to his Cara Sposa. You know it is *a marrying age* and *suitability* is little consulted. So do not be surprised to hear of the fulfillment of my presentations.

Mrs. Jones Bulloch[6] & myself (entre nous) have had *a talk*. I cannot ascertain whether she is the happier for her alliance. Sarah says my *straightforwardness* is inimical to discoveries that people do not shew the *intention* of their hearts to me while every body reads mine. I must grow prudent in my old age, and learn to conceal my feelings it is not dignified to shew too much of the *inner* woman. I believe Frances has committed as much & in that way as I have. Mrs. Hunter I think is *satisfied* with Catharine's choice – her ambition has been subdued by affliction. I really *think* this step of Catharine's will improve her character – her humility is already increased by it & her husband is one of your *duty* & a most sincere Christian – he dislikes society & I am inclined to think she will never attempt to draw him into it. Sarah Cecil is *unreconciled* to the marriage – she viewed Catharine as a Madame De Stael – we never know how high we stand until we fall – I had no idea that her reputation for intellect was so high. I have never thought her mind soared above mediocrity except as regards originality & humor as a companion she was delightful – she never possessed that strength & independence of character that distinguishes some of my friends. She always rested too much upon the worlds opinion. Do write soon & accept our united love to your Mamma & self your affect. Mary

1. The Savannah-based artist Richard West Habersham (1811–1878).

2. Captain Patrick Ramsbottom and Miss Henrietta Bordley were married on 6 December 1834 in the Cathedral of St. John in Savannah. Ramsbottom's previous wife, Bridget, also Irish-born, had died on 9 December 1833, aged thirty. *Register of Deaths in Savannah*, 5:13.

3. Mary Telfair found Mrs. O'Connor, an Irish widow, a position as a seamstress in Augusta. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 149.

4. *Othello,* 5.2.

5. It is unclear where Mary Telfair came across this common phrase.

6. The former Catharine Jones Hunter.

71 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 30 JANUARY 1835

I can with sincerity echo my dear Mary your reason for my silence "*dull, dull, dull.*" If you who are surrounded by so many dear relatives can plead that excuse you may imagine what my life must be – It is living in the world without any interest in its concerns. I have become so accustomed to solitude that I do not care for any society beyond my books and my own thoughts.

Mrs. Telfair and Margaret are with us, the former seems to enjoy visiting more than ever, and exemplifies the common saying that Parents renew their youth in their children. Poor Mary was in New Orleans when her mother last heard from her, she mentioned Mr. Cobbs health had not improved, and they thought of proceeding to Cuba – I regret that they left home, as from all that I hear Mr. Cobb must be too low to recover – George Jones has taken his wife to St. Augustine – she is a very interesting woman, and only wants health to be a treasure to him. – There is a fitness and propriety about her that shews *education* – you have always been a greater advocate for *Nature* than I have. It is better to be uninteresting from too much discipline than interesting from too little. – I went with my work yesterday & spent it with Mrs. Dr. Jones. I felt out of my own house like a stranger in a strange land – In the evening Catharine (*Hunter*) Bulloch came in, and her old character peeped out – Sarah Cecil says she is much happier for the step she has taken, but unwilling to let it be known.

Why should she conceal it? – Women are enigmas not only to their friends but to themselves. – I have been alternately engaged with Baxter & Miss Hannah More.[1] I am delighted with the former he certainly lived above while in the world – His remarks upon human friendship are full of wisdom & truth.

I have just finished the first volume of Miss More, and think her the *greatest* as well as the best of women – she certainly did more to promote the interests of Religion & Virtue than any woman that ever lived – I think her friends were all interesting – Newtons letters pleased me more than any of her male friends. Mrs. Kennicotts among her female bear the palm in my humble opinion.

Lord Orford (alias) the gay & witty Horace Walpole leaves a sad impression upon the mind[2] – I think his inscription upon the blank page of a Bible presented to Miss More proves his respect for the sacred volume as well as for the receiver of it. – What did you think of my Bordley story? is it not a romance in real life! We live to hear and witness strange things – It is reported that Mrs. Matthau is to become Mrs. Cuyler – I neither believe or disbelieve the report – He is not only her brother in law but her junior by many years – There are many things not criminal, very revolting to delicacy and there are many acts *legal* that people of strict honor shrink from – There is nothing perfect here "to err is human, to forgive divine."[3] – And after all much depends upon the view people take of things.

I knew you would not approve of an *old* face being taken by a *young* artist – He says the tournure of my *"Pieter"* (as our old cook calls it) resembles Miss Mary Few, which induced me to examine closely & I do think the *head* quite as much like yours as like mine. I am inclined to think the *huge,* I may almost say the *suspicious* bust, would tempt you to pass a brush over it, or reduce it in some other way.

Sarah & M desire their most affectionate regards – If I had consulted my mood I should not have written for it is a wretched one – Farewell write soon to your sincere and affect. Mary

1. Hannah More was particularly interested in education.

2. Horatio Walpole (1717–1797), Fourth Earl of Orford, was more commonly known as Horace Walpole, politician, writer, and architectural innovator.

3. Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (London, 1741), 2.325.

72 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 5 MARCH 1835

It is a long time my dear Mary since I have been cheered by a sight of your well known hand – I require a letter from you to elicit something like animation from me for I have been in a mental torpor for months – you cannot imagine the life that I lead neither will I attempt to portray it. We have seen less of our intimates than usual this winter owing to circumstances – They seem to think we ought to go to see them & I have not the spirit for even social intercourse – an uninteresting walk or ride is the extent of my efforts.

Mrs. Telfair & Margaret have been with us this winter the latter is still here – the former was summoned unexpectedly away to meet poor Mary,

whose Husband died in Marianna (East Florida) the day after their arrival at Mr. Longs – It was a merciful Providence which directed him to retrace his way from New Orleans – and permitted him to breathe his last among his kindred. Poor child she has been called upon early to drink deeply of the cup of affliction and I trust that her sorrows will be sanctified to her & that her child may be spared – as a comfort to her – It is healthy and a great pet with its Grand Mother, but I fear her treatment alias training of her grand-daughter will have a tendency to make her selfish – I wish you could have witnessed my first lesson of obedience – I wanted to take her measure for an apron she got into a rage and a *scuffle* ensued, I tried by gentle means to subdue her as the old man in the fable did the rude boy who went up the tree to steal apples – I found other means requisite I told her with *a look of Thunder* she should stand still & when she found me resolute & on my way with her up stairs she consented to behave well – after that nobody had any trouble in managing her, and all the credit was accorded to *my commanding air* – she became very fond of us all after she learned *to obey*. – My brief experience impels me to echo the words of an old Clergyman "the first lesson that a child ought to be taught obedience – the second lesson obedience – the third obedience." There is every thing to be said in favor of that single word – its enforcement is productive of happiness here & hereafter for no one who is not obedient to an earthly parent can be so to an heavenly one. – I am still reading Miss Hannah More and am nearly through the second volume – I have read it with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain, how her latter years were clouded by sorrow for the loss of beloved friends, and with what pious resignation she bore her accumulated trials – she was a rare exemplification of the following remark made by her to Newton – a Christian ought not to live so much out of the world as *above* it – she certainly took an *elevated* view of Christianity, and rested as little upon her own works for salvation as if she had never performed one good action – Her humility was deep and her charity boundless & those may be called the fruits of Faith – Sarah & myself have had an argument which she requests me to submit to your superior wisdom – it was the result of a conference I had with Mary Demere during a walk in the woods – She spoke of a religious character who she thought possessed humility as a Christian, but none as a woman – I admitted the truth of her remark – when I repeated it to Sarah she asserted that it was incompatible, I say it is compatible – What do you say? As you *possess humility* I may venture to tell

you that Mary Few is Mrs. Haig's *Oracle of Wisdom* – and the *oracle* must reply to the question – Mrs. Richd. Habersham spent yesterday morning with us she threw off her cloak for a regular talk and got upon her *insane* subject marriage – she hopes that Catharine will never be the *drudge* of any man – I shocked her *delicacy* by saying that I hoped she would be the friend, companion & wife of some excellent man – Mary I have lived to be distrustful – I once was credulous enough to think every body expected *real* opinions, but alas! the conduct of so many confute their sentiments, that I often listen with incredulity *even to good people.* – Perhaps I am too scrupulous – if so I must blame both nature & education. I respect Truth more than I can express, and if I could change our family motto, it should be (instead of *assiduity*) *"deeds not words."*

I will now continue Mrs. O'Connors *biographical* sketches – she was the source of such anxiety to *poor me* that I kept vigils for three nights trying to improve her condition – such a *lump* of Romance I never encountered – to my mental temperament it was as trying as the influence of a neighboring iceberg to the tempest lost mariner – I tried to infuse a little common sense into her brain, but there was no reservoir for it, every crevice was crammed with Byrons poetry. Sarah who was an invisible auditor said she *enjoyed* my last dialogue with her which I will give in *short hand* for your edification – shall I *dramatise* it – Oconnor Miss Mary don't you love poetry – it is to me Breakfast, dinner, & supper – I said it is miserable fare for any body particularly one in your situation – OC so I think Miss Mary it has already enervated my mind what would you recommend – I told her religious biography & the works of Miss Hannah (thinking it too late in the day for her to turn over the pages of History) she promised that she would read serious works – I have been fortunate enough to get an excellent situation for her in Augusta sempstress to Mrs. Cunningham – she took in such a quantity of work that she was very ill in consequence of the confinement to a heated room and the poor creature had after all her *toil* but three dollars and a half – if she had ten thousand a year she would be poor for judgment is left out of her brain – she is the creature of imagination & morbid feeling and I think a woman of principle – She might have realized my Fountain hopes but she was too romantic to marry for convenience & discouraged a supplicant for her fair hand worth she says 100,000 – perhaps a third of it for people generally have credit for three times as much as they

possess – it is a *magnifying* world, & a *magnetic* one to some – I have too few interests in it to love any thing but my few relatives & friends and am satisfied that the more I retire from it the better for me. Is Matilda with you, Margaret wishes to know if she received her letter – our united love to all thank Frances for her letter and do shew charity by writing soon to your affectionate Mary

73 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, [?] JANUARY 1836

Your "few and far between" letters my dear Mary after lagging on the way, reached me.

Your last gave a pitiable account of the disastrous fire in New York and I sincerely sympathise with those who have been suddenly deprived of the means of support – I have never suffered from poverty, but I know how to feel for those unaccustomed to privation who have been in a few hours reduced from Affluence to want.

Prosperity is not good for us, either as a Nation or individuals – we require chastening and are compelled to acknowledge that "sweet are the uses of adversity"[1] – We have all our trials, but pecuniary losses may be retrieved, while those precious links which unite us to our beloved relatives & friends when once severed can never be renewed on earth – Since I last wrote to you Mrs. Hunter[2] has been released from her bodily sufferings – Her death was a most happy one – She arose in the morning as usual, read her bible, and in the afternoon said she felt the symptoms of approaching death, gave all the necessary directions respecting her temporal affairs – and remarked to Catharine that she wished her to live frugally and aid the poor, that she regretted not giving alms more freely, to the last she spoke of the happiness she experienced in having made her peace with God, and the joy of being in his presence forever – not a doubt obscured her mind, which was blessed with reason to the last. I never thought she had a horror of death and her departure proved it, for she viewed it as a pleasant journey to her heavenly Home. Poor Catherine will deeply feel her loss as long as she is a sojourner in this "Vale of Tears." Now we see the hand of Providence in her union with a religious Man, who can strengthen her faith and as far as human aid avails support her under this severe bereavement.

The sad events which we are so frequently called upon to witness, as well as our own sorrows admonish us of the frailty of our existence and the

fading and unsatisfying joys of earth. I can truly say that I have no pleasure in any thing. Yesterday Dr. Haig[3] breathed his last. His death makes me take a mournful retrospect of the past – Our first acquaintance with him, was followed by the first breach made by death in our family and he lived to see it broken up entirely. – This New Year has been ushered in with unusual solemnity, On the 1st of January we saw our old friend Mrs. Hunter consigned to her kindred Earth, with the close of the last year her soul left its earthly tabernacle for its eternal home. – What a dream is {*illegible*} and how insignificant seems its interests when we view the lifeless body here and realize that the imperishable part is in a world of glory.

Our Cousins are with us, they have sold out all their possessions. – We expect Mrs. Telfair & her children every day. We have had a spring like winter. The Jasmine in bloom, and the air as mild as May. I am glad of it on account of the poor invalids who in consequence of the disturbances in Florida have tarried here. I have seen two with whom I am much pleased Mr. & Miss Goddard – the latter you know, she is the Sister of the *intellectual* Miss Goddard – she is intelligent and pleasing, but the Brother is charming, he seems to possess both sense & sentiment.

I feel my dear Mary that my letter is a very "*heavy*" one, but alas! my *light* days are over – and I cannot realise that they ever existed – Mrs. McAllister is on the wing, she weaves the web of pleasure daily – Reading parties, Tableaux & riding parties occupy her time so much that I seldom see her – she will never feel old – she is a Problem that I cannot solve. I must say farewell for my slender stock of ideas are exhausted.

Your affect. Mary. Love to your Mamma & Matilda.

1. *As You Like It*, 2.1.

2. Margaret Hunter nee Glen died in Savannah in December 1835 at the age of sixty-one. No cause of death was recorded. *Register of Deaths in Savannah*, 5:40.

3. Although it has proved impossible to positively identify "Dr. Haig," Mary Telfair's comments suggest that he was a relative of her sister Sarah's husband, Captain George Haig.

74 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 30 JANUARY 1836

Your last letter my dear Mary was quite a treat, it seemed an age since I last heard from you. I am glad to find your energies are not so dead-

ened as mine. Your attendance upon Stillmans lecture is proof that you can be drawn out of your shell.[1] As for me I have literally lived & breathed in the chimney corner & I find that my independence of society increases daily. I am the very Antipodes of Mrs. Codwise for I "cherish" nothing. I am glad that her cherished object at present is one who cannot be injured by her devotion but he may improve her. She has always been a paradox to me and realized Miss Hannah Mores picture of Lady Milbury. Louisa McAllister too seems to fit that portrait.

Our family is at present very large. My Cousins are with us & Mrs. Telfair's family are with us also. Mary looks badly, Margaret's health very good – the *little Doll*[2] very tractable. It seems to be a source of interest to its Mother & Grand Mother and *a Joy* for its Aunt Margaret. The aspects of affairs are lowering at the South. The Indian War causes great anxiety. A number of young men of promise have left their homes as Volunteers to Florida. It is a cruel warfare and quite unprovoked.[3] The French War is another trouble in perspective if it is declared I do not know what will become of the Southern country in its present unprotected state. I fear there will be an internal enemy to contend with too. But "sufficient is the day for the evil thereof."[4]

I was shocked to hear of the fate of poor Harriet Bronson, there was something truly melancholy in her dying in a foreign land, but if she was prepared for the solemn change it matters not. If her mind had been directed to something better she might have been a useful women. What different feelings the death of Delia Jones inspired.[5] She early, very early felt the insufficiency of Earthly joys & placed her hopes upon "the evidence of things unseen."[6] Her piety & resignation were remarkable in life & death. Though all was bright before her in this world, she was willing to exchange it & leave all she loved behind for a Mansion in her Fathers house. She took an affectionate farewell of all her friends recommended religion to them & while her spirit was engaged in prayer it left its testament of clay. George[7] has arrived here but I have not seen him. The loss of such a wife is a sad blight upon his prospects for she was deserving of all his love. I never knew so much sorrow in this world as at this time. I see Catherine Bulloch almost every day – she feels very deeply her loss.

Our love to your Mamma & Matilda when you see her. Most truly yours MT

1. It has proved impossible to identify Stillman.

2. Her grandniece Alberta.

3. A reference to what are often called the Wars of Indian Removal, which took place intermittently between 1817 and 1858.

4. This is a slight misquotation of Matthew, 6.33–34. The original reads, "Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof."

5. Delia Tudor Jones nee Gardiner (1812–1836) was the daughter of Robert Hallowell and Eliza Gardiner of Gardiner, Maine, and the first wife of George Noble Jones.

6. Hebrews, 11.1.

7. George Jones.

75 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 18 JUNE 1836

Your long expected letter per steam Packet arrived two days since – & I thank you for your efforts to fix us in comfortable lodgings – Mrs. Bedford would have suited us exactly for two reasons, the first its propinquity to you, and the second its privacy – but ere your letter arrived Mrs. Jones empowered Geo. Jones to get us lodgings with her at the Astor Hotel *that will be very near you.* When we thought of being alone we were opposed to a great Hotel for we take no Servant this year – a late law passed in the Legislature prohibits both slaves & free coloured persons from being taken on, so that Peter will be our only attendant.[1]

It is probable that Margaret L.[2] will accompany us – Her Mother is exceedingly anxious that she should do so – and as we go to no public Watering places I feel the responsibility of the charge less – she is very gay, and fond of pleasure and we you know are literally "the world forgetting by the world forgot"[3] – I think her much improved, her faults are those of youth – Mary lives just for her child – she still prefers the Up Country – Contrary to your predictions. – We shall miss our *staff* (Billy & Amy[4]) very little – If Peter can fall from the Dickey[5] to the grade of Waiter we shall keep him in our employment during the summer – as we shall be *pedestrians.* – I am afraid Sarah would seldom have reached Park Place if we took our lodgings at Mrs. Woods for she now clings to the House with the pertinacity of Ivy to an old ruin – We think of sailing in the Brig Madison the last of May – The Clays, Tom & his bride sail in the Belle tomorrow – The wedding was very private – I hope that she has a *teachable* spirit – if so Anne may do much towards her improvement.

It strikes me that she is a *Lassitudarian* oh! dear married life requires a double portion of energy and it does not answer to fold ones arms or *muse* when duties are multiplying annually. – There is something in *quiet* energy that awakens my unbounded admiration. If I was a Man about selecting a *Help Meet* instead of the usual standards beauty or fortune I should look for energy with its usual concomitants order and economy. – I have lived to think the latter a great virtue when connected with liberality. – Do we *keep pace* in these opinions?

We have had a northern spring cool & verdant and the roses have been as abundant as when Thompson painted them descending in showers – My plants flourish without an *awning* and invite me to shelter them in a Green house, but I have not *energy* enough to provide them with so troublesome an abode – My plants are my only recreation. Sarah has taken to Birds – she commenced with a pair, like Adam & Eve, but single blessedness prevailed – Adam eloped – since then *woers* have come to Eve in the forms of three Nonpareils & have been admitted into the Cage – Our garden is a Natural Aviary – And yet like the Master of *Lee Place* we desert it for New York – I feel a little wearied from rising unusually early and picking strawberries.

I have again attacked La Martine[6] – he is too much of an intellectual voluptuary – His love for his only child and her death is too affecting. I think his religion is too much that of the imagination. – I must say farewell with love to all very affectionately your MT

1. Presumably, Peter was a white employee of the Telfair family.
2. Her niece Margaret Long Telfair, the daughter of Thomas and Margaret Telfair.
3. Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, line 207.
4. Two enslaved people who worked for Mary Telfair and her sisters in Savannah.
5. Another name for a carriage.
6. Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869), the romantic poet.

76 GARDINER, MAINE, 14 AUGUST 1836

Your long wished for, long expected letter, dear Mary, arrived this afternoon. I wrote an *old fashioned budget* of a letter from Montreal requesting you to answer it immediately & direct to Boston. The answer has never been received. George Jones has just explained the reason why. I ought to

have paid the postage to the lines-ignorance not economy prevented my doing so, therefore dear Mary you must have thought me very negligent not to inform you of our progress "over the hills and far away" so says the old song of Greeenwich memory.

How I wished for you during my sojourn – there is nothing half so sweet as the society of a *contemporary friend*. I begin to think people must number the years to think alike, and feel alike. And yet you ought to feel younger and brighter than I do, for you have not experienced the same sorrows and disappointments.

We have been upwards of a fortnight in Gardiner, and as quiet as if we were in a *Convent* instead of a Hotel. The Gardiners call every day to see us, and contrive to shew us all the beauties of the surrounding country. I will take a lesson out of their book to be hospitable *in their way*. I have for several years past shunned Strangers, simply because I felt a reluctance to pay a visit or receive one, when I might have shewed kindness & attentions more gratifying to their tastes.

The *independent habits* of these regions would delight you. Imagine me seated in an old fashioned chair with an *antiquarian* of a Horse, Emma Gardiner driving to the abode of a humble neighbor to afford me a fine view of the Kennebeck & transact business for herself. I am delighted with her character it exhibits a unity of piety, intelligence, energy, and disinterestedness. She is a Housekeeper, and yet finds time to devote to books, and the needle-works for charitable institutions and visits the poor & sick for miles around – she is cheerful but never gay. What a clergymans wife she would make!

I think Mrs. Gardiner deserves a patent right for educating a family. The best test of superiority in a Woman. The connexion though so soon dissolved has been of great advantage to the Jones's particularly to Fenwick, who was at one time very devoted to fashionable pursuits. Emma Gardiner's influence over her is a very happy one, she directs her reading, and her example must have a salutary effect.

Mary Jones is the very personification of innocence. She seems to extract amusement from a country life, she has learned to milk the cows & to tow a boat last winter. I hope that a winter in Boston will not *fashionize* her too much. I dread the influence of fashionable associates. The youthful mind is so open to impressions and so apt to be dazzled by the glitter of *haut*

ton. If Mothers took the same gay view of life that I do there would be no "bringing out," and *Belle* would be an obsolete word.

I find you no longer *vibrate* between two opinions and that Philadelphia will not be your future home. When you *cast anchor* at Brooklyn we shall begin to plan *our* cottage. Mrs. Jones talks of erecting one on the banks of the Kennebeck it is not too far from you to suit me. She is right to come here for after all what is life without friends. It may be much to those who live for the world and its heartless intercourse but not for the rational and the domestic.

I think the society of Mr. Gardiner is a great advantage to George. He is quite a model for a Gentleman, so perfectly unpretending, and refined omitting no duty – and uniting sterling virtues with excellent sense. How delightful to see such a head of family. How few men *shine* in that capacity. They seem to think if they furnish *food* & *raiment* it is enough, without regard to the minds and souls of their offspring. I have found that superiority of character in *real* life gives one a higher standard than any furnished in History or Romance. I think the Gardiners must contrast their Father with the *Insignificants* who cross their paths in the forms of *Dandies* and *Money Makers*.

We leave here on Monday for Boston where we shall tarry for a fortnight. I will write to you from thence. I do not know how the noise of a city will agree with us after the quiet and seclusion of the last three weeks. I hope to see a good deal of Mrs. Gray if she is in Boston. My only amusement will be riding about the country in the vicinity of Boston.

We took a sweet drive on the banks of the Kennebec this afternoon. I witnessed two *expedients* that brought you to mind, such is the necromantic power of association. A man navigating the river on a log & paddling all the way, another in a boat with a tree instead of a sail to catch the breeze. Well may Yankee enterprise become a *proverb*. I almost wish I was a *Yankee*.

Do write & direct to Boston & our united love to all your family. I remain ever your friend dear Mary, MT

77 MAVERICK HOTEL, EAST BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 20 AUGUST 1836

We arrived here my dear Mary on Tuesday last and are most comfortably accommodated in the fourth story – We were never accommodated

so much to our taste *two* beds in each room – a delightful drawing room overlooking the adjacent country & the City of Boston We are on a small Island, but if we wish at any time to go into the City an Omnibus & steam boat transports us there in 8 or ten minutes – Uncle & Mrs. Jones were our inducement for coming here – Little George was in extacies and on board the steam boat at six in the morning to afford his assistance – He is a wonderful *child* his Mother placed him at the celebrated school kept by Ollcott, he told her he thought he had better remove him from it, for he did not approve of a Unitarian Teacher – he said if he was 23 years of age there would be no danger but he thought he was too young to be tried, he could not answer for his faith not being shaken – I wish you were here, I think you would admire the beautiful harbor – The society I cannot *laud*. They are polite, sociable – I sat an hour with a Lady yesterday morning who gave me the Annals of Boston. I begin to think that though in the land of steady habits they are an *immoral* people to quote Mrs. Sukely "every thing has its opposite" At the South the intercourse between Ladies & Gentlemen is not sufficiently free, but we never hear of *misdemeanours*, here the intercourse is as *free as air* and the result of it in some instances in high life mournful. They talk of such and such people being extremely pious who are avowed Unitarians Dr. Channing quite an idol among them [1] – We asked a poor woman to point out to us the Presbyterian church she said there were two do you want to go to the orthodox we said yes; and found a very small room with a congregation of Twenty or Thirty and heard an excellent sermon decidedly the most earnest & practical preacher I have heard this summer. I do think the New Englanders remarkable for general information as well as common sense the only thing against them is their religion.

What an improvement it would be to the *Southrons* to come here every summer & learn enterprise industry & economy – I do not think I am deficient in the two last considering I am a *Southern*, but the first I am now too old to acquire – Timidity has grown with my growth taken too deep root to be eradicated from its weedy bed – We had a delightful *voyage* from Gardiner – Mrs. Campbell & Mrs. Richard (who was a Miss Gardiner) our compagnons de voyage We left the mouth of the Kennebek for the wide ocean just as {*illegible*} sunsett was shedding its golden beams, upon numerous isles, and mingling them with clouds of sable hue – I never was more impressed by the splendour of the skies just as one friend left us

(the sun) another arose (the moon) to soothe us with her paler light – The grandeur of the scene awakened the latent enthusiasm of Mrs. Campbell, she interested us with her "colloquy sublime"[2] for two hours – she has a delightful mind without either quickness or brilliancy. I admire the christian principle that impels her to make continual sacrifices of feeling in the performance of duties. She went on a visit to her sisters Husband and *his second wife,* whom public report proclaimed a cruel step mother. She went to judge for herself and returned perfectly satisfied that she was conscientious in the discharge of her duties. – She said she occupied the same room as she was accustomed to in the life time of her sister was surrounded by the same inanimate objects, and fancied that she heard her voice – What a trial! but I believe we may be schooled to bear at one period of life what we could not in the commencement of our pilgrimage – I told Mrs. Campbell she ought to go into fashionable life as a Missionary she said she would rather go to Africa as one – I have been here a week & only once for two hours to Boston – Tomorrow I must go to see Mrs. Grey – I have been reading two delightful books – The life of Adam Clark & the life of Baron Cuvier[3] who was a rare union of Talent & Virtue. I think the simple picture exhibited of his mental sufferings after the loss of his only child too touching – she must have been worthy of such a Father. I had access to Mr. Gardiners Library when in Maine, and found some delightful English productions which have not yet been published in this Country – Do write direct to the Maverick Hotel – East Boston. I long to hear from you with love to your Mamma Fr & M I remains truly yours MT

1. The Reverend William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), pastor of the Federal Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts, and a founder of Unitarianism.

2. Scott, *Heart of Midlothian*, chapter 2.

3. Joseph Butterworth Bulmer Clarke, *An Account of the Infancy, Religious, and Literary Life of Adam Clark* (New York, 1832); Sarah Lee, *Memoirs of Baron Cuvier* (London, 1833).

78 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, TREMONT HOTEL, 11 SEPTEMBER 1836

Your dream my dear Mary proved indeed "the fabric of a vision" for no congenial spirit in the form of a man or *sprite* has crossed my path of sin-

gle blessedness. We need a Joseph to interpret such a brilliant assemblage of images. Thank you for your consent to the dreams fulfillment it would be all important to have your support in conjunction with Mrs. Campbells, on such a momentous occasion, as one of her *cherished hopes* is to see me *yoked*, even if it be unequally.

I am no disciple of the Bridgen notion and should regret any of my friends adopting it, as I wish to see them extend their interests and usefulness if they can, without reference to the worlds opinion or "dread laugh."[1] I believe on this subject we perfectly agree. There is no folly in marrying late if people marry suitably, and observe no more form than *in walking to Church*. It is the pomp & ceremonies attendant upon a wedding with the *billing* and *cooing* that precedes it which makes it appear ridiculous for those who are not young to marry. We might unite in writing a Treatise on the subject which would reflect more credit upon our minds than "the Englishman" at Newport which *we* applaud so highly.

We left the Maverick yesterday for private apartments at the Tremont, imagine our surprise to see Mr. & Mrs. McAllister with Mr. Ward and *suite* here. Anne Clay too on a visit to them – she is passing a few days with Mrs. Gray and returns to Lancaster tomorrow – she took a drive with us to Cambridge. I will reserve what I saw there for oral communication.

Mr. Ward is *desperate* and I give Anne credit for treating him with such civility, it requires an amazing self control to keep *the Lover at a distance* and yet retain him as a friend. He is just the sort of man I should be unchristian enough to *hate* if he loved me. I wish he would look for some *amiable house keeper at home* "to gild the evening of his days."[2] He is just *wise* enough to sigh for a woman above his reach, but he will never *entre nous* obtain one unless she can swallow a golden pill. If all womankind thought as I do, maybe *monied* men would find it a hard matter to get paired.

I am very anxious for you to visit Boston & its charming environs and to know some of the people – they understand how to shew kindness & affection better than any people I have ever known. If we were not opposed to visiting and had not taken our stand to remain *in home bred* retirement we should be whirled in every direction. Tomorrow we are going with a pleasant old couple to Salem to visit the Museum there – the next day we go to Lowell to visit the Manufactories and then we shall wind up with a visit to Mrs. Lymans garden. Mrs. Campbell is to act as our Pioneer.

I find the little excursions I have made have been of service to my body & mind. We heard a great deal of the centennial Celebrations at Cambridge from Mrs. Dr. Jones who was present – also of Dr. Wayland's oration at Phi Beta.[3] I never expect as long as I am a wanderer here to enter any public place but a church.

I have a *presentiment* concerning Dr. Wayland you can *guess* it but do not whisper it to Anne Wallace. I am in daily expectation of receiving an answer to my letter concerning *Sally McIlroys* apartment, which I hope will be sizeable.

I hear New York is crowded – we had sad tidings today from the South – The cholera is in Charleston & Augusta. How mysterious is the approach & departure of that awful disease! With the love of all dear Mary I conclude with a request that you will direct your next to the Tremont Hotel – Boston affectionately yours, MT

1. Probably from Thomson, *The Seasons,* "Autumn," line 233.

2. Mercy Otis Warren, *The Adulateur, a Tragedy, As It Is Now Acted in Upper Service* (Boston, Mass., 1773), 24.

3. Francis Wayland, *A Discourse on the Philosophy of Analogy: Delivered Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Rhode Island, September 7, 1831* (Boston, 1831).

79 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 14 NOVEMBER 1836

My thoughts turn to you as soon as my feet reach Terra Firma. We had a delightful passage of 8 days. We left New York in a storm. I was very unwell with a violent pain in my neck & shoulders which was so increased by the time we got underway I had to resort to the Medicine Chest which in conjunction with sea sickness soon restored me & by the time we turned Hateras I was myself again but am again confined to my chamber with a renewed cold. I am of such a *sympathetic* temperature that I catch every passing epidemic with as much ease as the canvas received the breeze. The Influenza is prevalent here and I am the only one that has taken it – Margaret was quite disappointed at not finding her mother here, and seems quite {*illegible*} she misses the excitement of Mrs. Holmes soirees which were *yawnees* to me. I never felt the want of conversation so much for I felt a little of my old interest in it reviving, but who was there to talk to on any subject, but pounds, shillings, & pence. I do not think we shall patron-

ize Mrs. Holmes next summer after the *unconscionable bill* she sent us, we must turn our attention to Mrs. Laidlaw in Chamber St.

I quite long to hear your decision abt. winter residence. I am afraid you will find Brooklyn very cold & dreary. I am also anxious to know what Frances's plans are for the winter.

I dare say you pitied us the night we left New York, for the blast was wild & loud, but our captain was too prudent to launch upon the deep sea while the gale continued. We put back & anchored at Staten Island where we were all very sea sick in consequence of the excessive fetching of the ship.

I found the Clays and Arnolds the most agreeable people I have ever been to sea with. Mrs. Clay (*senior*) confirmed me in my oft expressed opinion to you. If we wish to find *real unalloyed* sentiment, simplicity & truth we must go to the old. I used to sit for hours in tete a tete with her in her state room. She has natural eloquence & more originality than any one I have ever known in fact I cannot find words to express my respect & admiration for her. As a companion I prefer her to any of her children, she is so unstudied, so noble & independent.

I have at long last become acquainted with Eliza Clay – she strikes me as being one of the most disinterested of human beings – her devotion to Tom's wife was unwavering – poor soul I never saw such a sufferer from the sea sickness – she was reduced to the helplessness of infancy. She reminded me of Mrs. Telfair in her young days the same meeting of the brows, and listlessness Sarah & myself were used to exclaim when we saw him bending over her & devoting himself in every way to her comfort. How it carries us back to past times.

Well there is no accounting for attachments. If (*entre nous*) Tom Clay was 21 I should mourn over his destiny, but he is old enough to create resources independent of a wife. She is so entirely different from his Mother & Listless. Why did he not take Eliza for his pattern such a woman would have made him so happy, but perhaps it is better for us not to be too happy in this world. He has intellect enough & character enough to have obtained the highest prize in the Matrimonial Lottery, for a lottery it is at best, how could such a man *choose* a blank! There is *a tide* & that tide flows often in a wrong channel.

Do not say anything of these observations but burn this scrawl – and write soon to your affectionate Mary.

80 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 6 APRIL 1837

This is the last letter I shall direct to you at Brooklyn my dear Mary, for the time (*the ides of May*) is rapidly approaching when you will be transplanted to Green Street. The land marks of Greenwich memory are all vanished and my geographical knowledge is too limited now a days to *guess* where Green Street lies.

I hope that you have recollections of New York sufficiently agreeable to make your return there pleasant. Does Mrs. Tillotson follow or does Matilda who I believe both plans and executes for her *Dynasty*, prefer remaining at Brooklyn.

Frances seems to be still unsettled, she leans I think towards the Quaker City, and thinks if we become *demi* residents there, that we shall find the Smiths able auxiliaries as well as herself in promoting our plans. Williamina is a perfect *man* as regards business – I feel as if anticipation had deserted my brain, and find it as difficult to look forward, as it once was to repress the risings of hopes and plans.

We have just heard of the death of Mrs. Archibald Bulloch[1] who you may recollect seeing at Saratoga some years since. She has been in a consumption for several years and perfectly prepared for the change; indeed she has ardently longed & prayed for death. Poor Catherine has lost in her a second mother this event must renew her sorrows. When I see our old acquaintances dropping into the grave in every direction I feel that if my life is protracted that there will be few "familiar faces" left for me to look upon.

Mrs. Campbell is still with us, she is very much of an Invalid upon an average she has been confined to her room half the winter, and suffers much from nervous feelings. She has let me into a secret in the training of Children that they may be trained without punishment which I believe you approve of. I am no friend to excessive indulgence, and I sometimes *call to order*. To take a deep interest in children and be *soothed* by their noise they must be your own. Mrs. C. thinks we are *Phenomenas* in nature to put up so quietly with children, but I think my *tolerance* is altogether cultivated. Sarah says these very questions excite her nerves, and Margarets *love of order* makes "the playful children just let loose from school"[2] a little annoying. The rise and progress of them is as wonderful as that of nations – to think of our old *foe* Jabez Jackson being *gazetted* on account of ill health.

I hope that he will live to repent of his *arts*. He is gone to Europe to try the efficacious climate of the South of France – and signifies his intention of returning to take his seat in the next Congress.

What a climate is ours! Yesterday we had summer heat to day a winter storm which excludes us from our *Jardin des plantes*. We have a little spot in front of our house which is visited by the early sun that occupies Margaret and myself an hour or two every day. Your Geranium is in full blossom, and attracts great admiration it occupies the most conspicuous place in our little verandah. I am training a hedge not such a one as we saw at Miss Gibb's farm near Newport, but an humble privet instead of a practical hawthorn.

I wish I had more resources to gild (if possible) the evening of my days. As our friends drop off by marriage & death, and society loses all its attractions, which it has with me, we require the varied occupations of domestic life to keep us from listlessness and despondency. I cannot take any interest in the *detail* of housekeeping. I could keep a house well from duty, but my *heart & soul* could *not* be engaged in it.

Frances writes me that she feels too old to make new friends, and so do I – she has spirits to recommend her and what a powerful recommendation it is. I feel mine ebbing every day, and the want of interest in every surrounding object increasing. Have you been reading any thing new & worth recommending to me? Will you be near your Aunt Maria's lodgings – Margaret thinks you will be near Ann Wilks.

Do write and let us know something respecting your movements. Our love to your Mamma & Matilda. When I go to my room and feel alone I fancy you in the same situation in your *lilliput*. Sarah complains a good deal her health is very delicate but she rides every day and thinks her strength will return when the weather becomes uniform. Affectionately yours Mary

1. Sarah Bulloch nee Glen was aged 61 at the time of her death. She was recorded as having died of "Consumption." *Register of Deaths in Savannah,* 5:61.

2. Goldsmith, "Deserted Village," line 120.

81 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 25 APRIL 1837

I have just received your letter dear Mary and made myself a nice pen (a new accomplishment) which verifies the old proverb that necessity is the mother of invention.

The natural indolence and independence of my character keep up a continual warfare almost equal to that of the flesh and spirit. I never look into myself & see the *compound* of contradictory qualities without feeling an increased indulgence towards the failings of my fellow mortals. I have lived to see every thing earthly fade before my eyes and to feel most deeply that the world contains nothing but my own small family and friends to cheer the dreary waste. I can truly say with Cowper that "the only aramantine wreath on Earth is Virtue, and the only lasting treasure Truth."[1]

I regret to hear of the pecuniary distresses in New York – they are also very great here. As a nation we are too devoted to money making and needed a check to all that absorbing spirit of the times.

You must feel quite *made up* now that Frances's cheerful spirit is added to your circle. I hope that Mary will outgrow her present complaints.[2] My cousins always mention her in all their letters and must miss her very much. They take up little interest in the Philadelphians.

It is difficult for people who are not young to form new friendships. It requires so much congeniality of taste & feeling to draw us towards people in after life "An interchange of ideas, and play of affections" seem necessary for those who possess mind and heart. I often dread *stagnation*. We must live *out* of ourselves in order to promote the flow of benevolent affections. Ennui is woman's direct foe – nothing I believe but religious principle combined with active duty & *bodily* experience, can allay its subtle inroads. Intellectual pursuits are no ramparts to defend us from the attack of that merciless enemy. I agree with you in thinking that injudicious friendships injure us more than malignant enemies. I have been made to *shrink* into nothing from the *puffings* of one very lately. How mortifying to be dragged before the public when our walk in life is retired to seclusion.

Mrs. Campbell left us a day or two since – He came down for her – Our Mansion is reduced to its wonted stillness.

Sarah's & Margarets nerves are more sensitive to the noise of children than mine though I cannot say it is *music to my ear*. How few women know how to train children! I think Mrs. Richards the daughter of Mrs. Gardiner deserves a patent for the management of hers – it was a perfect system if any thing can be perfect in this imperfect world. The little fellow is an only child of three years of age, he winds his Grand Mothers worsted feeds his silk worms and arranges the flowers in the flower pots with his own little hands, is put to bed at sunsett – such obedience I never saw before.

We received two parcels of flower seeds picked and put up by him & nicely stitched. I believe the secret of usefulness & happiness in life is to give occupation as early as possible to children to make them practical & responsible.

I have had a *consignment* from Mrs. William Gray – a very pleasant couple from the land of steady habits. I took them to Bonaventure[3] yesterday afternoon they were charmed with the druidical oaks – they spent last evening with us, and I really enjoyed their intelligent society.

The only way to cultivate society naturally is to bring people into your family circle without any parade. I leave it to the gay & fashionable to entertain them with numbers and all the etceteras that follow in the train of the tea party's & dinner party's. How could I ever have enjoyed these unmeaning things? Not if we must go through an ordeal to learn what true enjoyment consists in – we must spend half of life, and be schooled and disciplined by sorrows and disappointments to know how to spend the other half.

We talk of leaving here the middle of June & if you are in New York bustling as it is will make it our Headquarters for some time. Sarah is much better but very much alive to the changes of weather. We heard a few days since of the death of John Cumming.[4] Anne returned to Augusta previous to that event.

I have been reading three experiments in living "Below our means, up to our means and above our means." It is written by Mrs. Lee[5] of Boston sister to Mrs. Schuyler. You must read it – it is quite in accordance with your views. The story conveys a fine moral lesson. It ought to be disseminated as a tract. I don't think either you or I require checks to extravagance. I have to create wants & find it as difficult as some to restrain them.

Have you seen the young Ladies friend[6] – you & I are too old to profit by it but Mary Chrystie may be improved by many of its hints – it is also written by a Boston Lady.

Love to your dear circle & believe me to be ever your affect. Mary

1. Cowper, *The Task*, Book III, "The Garden," line 266. The exact quotation is "aramanthyne flower."

2. Mary Few's niece, Mary Few Chrystie.

3. Bonaventure is a cemetery near Savannah.

4. John Cumming was a member of the eminent Cumming family based mainly in and

around Augusta, Georgia. The friendship between the Cummings and the Telfairs dated back to the Revolutionary period.

5. Mary Catharine Jenkins Lee.

6. [Eliza Ware Farrar,] *The Young Ladies Friend. By a Lady*, (Boston, 1836).

82 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 15 MAY 1837

Our evening escort from Park Place to Murray Street Henry Dardon leaves here tomorrow for Charleston I cannot let him go without bearing a few lines to you my dear Mary – He has also offered to take a box of shells from me for Mary Chrystie whose wanderings (though not far enough south) I trust have had a beneficial tendency. Summer has sett in with us and we are beginning to uncarpet and uncurtain preparatory to a northern migration. I sometimes feel like a mere machine moving to & fro without the feelings being interested and yet Home is not the Home that it used to be – if our pleasures are derived from association so are our miseries.

I think we shall apply for lodgings at Miss Laidlaws in Chamber Street it will lessen the distance between us and will be near Parmley in whose ruthless hands I have to place myself. I suppose New York will be less crowded than usual owing to the scarcity of money people will be obliged to stay at home – The depression is dreadful here several of our most prudent merchants have failed – Joe Cumming is said to be among the number – I have gathered up your *broken sentences* and made my conclusion that Cousin Alfred is dissatisfied with the management of little Alfred without breathing a syllable of it to any one. I wonder that he does not provide him with a Private Tutor and have him constantly under his eye – I have arrived at the conclusion that a boy may get along if the natural temperament is good with the education Walter Scott gave his, do you remember his remark to Irving "I teach them to shoot, to ride, and to speak the truth the rest I leave to their Tutor."[1] To speak the truth is the basis of every virtue, and if that is early implanted the fruits will appear in after life – The most superior Characters I have ever known have been self formed, self disciplined and self balanced – I think very few people know how to direct the minds and feelings of children – They either do too much or too little trifles which Cowper says form the sum of human life are either wholly neglected or made a matter of too much moment – Imperfection is stamped upon every

thing here, and the very best efforts of a human being are very fallible and the more that we know of ourselves the less we expect from others.

I suppose by this time you are located in Green Street – Write & let me know if you like your new situation – The Omnibus will be a substitute for the Ferry Boat – I expect that you will *live* in it. Dr. Smith will never be able to reach you *on foot* and must regret the hour that you left his neighborhood – He must have felt towards you as Humboldt did to the Countess of Rusinford – that it was essential to his happiness to spend every evening with you – As I feel very, very stupid my dear Mary I will not draw upon your patience too largely but say farewell until a brighter mood comes upon me, those moods are like angelic visits As refreshing showers vivify the vegetable creation so does refreshing conversation enliven our minds and I do hope to have many a long and pleasant talk with you this summer. Our love to your Mamma Frances & Matilda very affectionately yours MT

1. It has proved impossible to find this extract in Scott's writings. However, the original seems to have come from the Greek historian Heroditus, who asserted that the Persians taught their sons these same three things.

83 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 1 JUNE 1837

I received your letter last evening my dear Mary. I wish it had arrived two days earlier, that the Cadle plan might have been adopted. I only wrote two days ago to request Mrs. Barclay to engage rooms for us at Mrs. Peacey's in Vesey Street or Miss Laidlaws in Chamber Street. They are both small establishments. Sarah's physical temperament shrinks from an *airy* boarding house Mrs. Helmer's *long table* connected with the clatter of knives and the play of the breezes does not suit her, and my *mental temperament* is opposed to a crowd. I am never so much alone as when surrounded by many faces. I cannot be cheered by what cheers most people, and when I see people growing old clinging to a certain sort of excitement it fills me with wonder & compassion.

I regret dear Mary to hear that you have been a sufferer in a pecuniary point of view – but there is no one I am sure who would feel it less – simple habits and humble views are a treasure to the possessor, and I agree with you in thinking that a splendid establishment is not to be coveted. The cares, anxieties & vexations which appertain to one render it more a source

of misery than of pride – *If I know myself* I can truly say a competency is all I desire. Riches bring responsibilities and they have wings and "grandeur is a dream."

The depression here is very great. The planters as the merchant feels it – the incomes of the former will be diminished one third of what they have been, so much the better for them. The high price of cotton for the last three years was an injury to the seller as to the buyer. We have had our share of the losses an epidemic upon one of our places swept off many lives & a conflagration lately consumed our mill & all the lumber ready for transportation the latter I did not feel but the former was most distressing. Indeed the past winter was an anxious one in many respects – First Sarah Haig's illness, then Mrs. Campbells and her children. – Our Servants have all been very sick but I will not continue my recital of domestic grievances. I ought to be thankful that I have two to share them with me if I stood alone they would crush me.

I will search for McCalls history of Georgia & bring it with me.[1] I regret to hear of Mr. De Rhanes failure – we always feel when a reverse befalls the unostentatious & the benevolent. Retrenchment is necessary for every one. Sarah says she believes if I had to retrench Carriages & Horses would be the last thing to be put down. It is certainly the only luxury I enjoy. There is something so soothing to my mind driving through the woods, listening to the carol of the birds as I go along and "The Harp of the woods" alias moanings of the Pines.

I am glad to hear you have an inch or two of ground to cultivate. I would rather live in a cottage with extensive grounds than in a Place without if I were a Lady of high rank instead of simple Mary Telfair. Our shrubbery is the admiration of every body and they come to look at the Dahlias. The grass from being constantly watered has an remarkable hue. Some people think us crazy to leave such a spot but "every thing must have its opposite" in this world. We may have every object around us that can please the eye and the taste and feel desolate. There never was a truer saying than "the heart knoweth its own bitterness."[2]

We sail on the 10th of this month it is a fortnight earlier than we desired to leave home but we availed ourselves of the opportunity of Uncle & Mrs. Jones's going. The Clays also go in her. I have never been to sea with Anne. I know her only as a *Lands Woman* of the highest order.

Is Frances with you? I long to hear some of her strokes of humour. Though not an aspiring character I am glad to hear that Matilda has *mounted* to the height. *Unsettled* is stamped upon every American brow – how I wish that we were *settled* characters. The Northern winters are too cold for us the Savannah summers too warm consequently we are *wanderers*.

I hear the Augusta world has *endowed* General Smith with a million and a half. I am never surprised at any reports of that sort after hearing of my own *endowments*. I am wearied of the words *"you can afford anything."* When we meet I have so much to talk about after Parmley does his work – that hangs over me with *iron weight*. I hope that "a change will come o'er the spirit of my dream"[3] when I get to New York. Such sadness overwhelms me when I leave home and return to it – so much is life made up of associations.

Mrs. Grimes & the Potters are to be our fellow passengers. The *tongue* of the former I dread – it makes me so nervous. You must look out for the Ocmulgee in the news paper, that is the name of our ship.

I sent your letter to Mr. Few.[4] I hailed a Methodist elder at the gate of our convent to know where he was the reply was at Columbus in this state. Poor Fanny Few what a fate was hers! I trust that she was prepared for it but to the young Death always seems distant.

Love to your Mamma. Your truly affect. Mary

1. Hugh McCall, *The History of Georgia: containing brief sketches of the most remarkable events up to the present day*, 2 vols. (Savannah, 1811–1816).

2. Proverbs, 14.10.

3. Byron, "The Dream," stanza 3.

4. Ignatius Few, a cousin of Mary Few.

84 PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, 30 SEPTEMBER 1837

We arrived here safely my dear Mary after encountering a crowd of 400 persons in the steam boat. I think the *evils* of travelling greatly encreased by its facilities – when people depended upon sloops & stages for transportation they were not likely to be jostled out of their existence.

We are lodging in Gerard row a short street off Chesnut with nothing to be seen but a row of brick houses. The situation is gloomy in the extreme.

My cold is so bad that I can go out but little and the weather is hot & damp. We have no boarders in the house being a small establishment but four young men who appear to be *studying something* one they call *Doctor*, another *Captain* who I have discovered is an officer in the Navy. He is *fierce* for talk, but gets no encouragement. You know I deal in prepossessions & I am not prepossessed in his favor, having no sympathy for *consequential pretenders*.

We have a very long walk to get to my Cousins, and a still longer one to the Marshall House where the Jones's lodge. We have two delightful bed rooms communicating and this petite mansion is as clean & quiet as if the Shakers presided over it.

Say to Frances that the Smiths enquired most particularly after her & the bairnes Becky paid her some grand compliments to the truth of which I can bear testimony. I hope that Mary is better though I think the autumn will be trying to her. I went yesterday to see a private collection of old paintings several very good. Mary Ritchie is quite a *Bethuneite*.[1] I was to have gone with her to hear his evening lecture on Wednesday but was prevented by bad weather. His church is near here & we shall go tomorrow – I understand that he is very popular – it is good for him to be in this staid city, where there is no *Uncle Peter* to allure him to his festive board, and no Savannah social entertainments to elicit his humor.

I hear that "poor *Mary*" is confined to her bed. She may linger for many years, but there is no prospect of her restoration to health.

We separated from the Judge & his fair protégé Capt. & Mrs. Clark at the steam boat – they passed on to Baltimore the next day. Loyd Rodgers was on board. I think his face & voice like Mr. Tillottsons. I do not believe from a conversation I overheard that he is capable of appreciating Eliza Clay. Beauty is the ideal with him and I should sooner think of his becoming a slave to the *corporal* charms of Miss Howard than the *mental* ones of Eliza Clay.[2] I know you think women less valued in Southern than in Northern regions. I do not. Human nature is the same every where.

I am going to visit some *Jardin des plantes* next week, and shall think how much you would enjoy the sight of them. Our early propensity for flowers *fostered* in Greenwich Garden seems to cling to us and I am so unfortunate Sarah says I give them a watery grave.

Have you moved into your new House? Let me know how you feel in it. I miss my confabs with you & my omnibus excursions to Green Street more than I can tell.

Our combined love to your Mamma Frances & Matilda and write soon to your affectionate Mary

1. Mary Ritchie, the third daughter of Edward Telfair's brother William and his wife Elizabeth Bellinger Telfair, married Alexander Ritchie in Nassau in 1799. After his death she moved to the Lowcountry. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 43–44. A Bethunite was a follower of the Reverend G. W. Bethune, pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church in Philadelphia.

2. Eliza Clay was Anne Clay's sister.

85 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 28 NOVEMBER 1837

My heart always *warms* towards you my dear Mary, with increased love when ever I receive one of your delightful letters. I feel as if you were very near "within hail" as the crackers say. I am glad to hear that you are so pleasantly located in ninth street let me know your number, for I am a great friend to *numbers* both mathematically and poetically.

The heat since our return has been very great and we have had equally cold weather – ours is a climate of extremes. You are right in thinking that my heart does not bound at the name of *Home*. In my early days I thought it a paradise but it was those who surrounded me that gave a charm to it – now I feel like a stranger every where no spot on Earth that I dare to call *home*.

Your account of the Miss Livingstones interested me very much.[1] Savannah is a dreary place for people to come without friends. There is nothing but evergreens to cheer the eye. I will call and see them and hope to be useful to them. The sick and afflicted have always claims upon those who have known suffering themselves. We have some one stepping in every evening to see us but no *Gill* among them. Ours is a *harbour for married men* and we have concluded that they are a great *deal* more agreeable without their wives than with them. The Judge and *Judgess* with young Harry came a few evenings since & passed it with us. Mrs. Wayne & myself talked of Mary Few. I like her all the better for *understanding* and *appreciating* you. I told Catherine Bulloch it was a proof that she was not thoroughly a *Woman of the World*. I do think her a Woman of excellent mind and temper eminently fitted for Society.

I have turned to gardening but have made as yet no progress except rooting up the grass. I hired an English Gardner who proved a disciple of Bacchus – cheated me and took umbrage because he could not exact more money than he got from others. When the walks are gravelled and the Shrubs sett out it will look very sweetly. I hope I shall not quote Solomon as I often do with regard to glass, china & fine furniture "Vanity and vexation of spirit."[2]

Mrs. Curtis Bolton[3] and one daughter are spending the winter in Savannah. When Catherine Bulloch heard of their arrival she exclaimed Well, Mary Telfair will have two more *Pensioners* how characteristic of her is this *witticism.*

I received a note from Anne Clay introducing a Mrs. Phillips to me from Boston. She describes her thus – a woman of cultivated mind, quite accomplished and a devout spirit – she says she met with you some years ago in Middletown. Do you remember her? She & her adopted son are both in very bad health.

I am engaged in reading Lockheads life of Walter Scott[4] – as you are a dear lover of natural character you must read it. As for me I am *bewitched* my dormant enthusiasm has been kindled by the rich vein of thought, feeling & humor which springs from his mind in every page. I feel as if I had known him intimately from my childhood so familiar are some of the traits of his character to me. It is a singular fact that with some people melancholy is mingled with every enjoyment. If I enjoy a book or conversation an interesting scene in Nature it leaves sadness behind. But this savors of what I dislike egotism so I will turn to some other theme.

Sarah Cecil is living life over again in her grand nieces and nephews – *lucky for her* – Catherine Bulloch is absorbed in her adopted children I expect Mr. B & herself here this evening to eat some oysters with us. Every body has their *Hobby* but me – I candidly acknowledge that I am *Hobbyless.*

I suppose you see a great deal of your sweet neighbor Anne Wilkes remember me to her and to *little Anne* who I think often of & connect with some of the pleasant moments of my last visit to New York. I regret exceedingly to hear of the ill health of Mr. Tillotson. I think he ought to change the climate. I wish they were near you in New York. I can see Frances in my minds eye knowing her location but without *magnetic* influence I cannot see you in your new House. Eliza Clay must describe it.

There is no hope for the "young son of chivalry" – his constancy will not be rewarded. He is too *unnatural* the longer I live the more I dislike *mannerism*.

With love to your family compact dear M I remain truly yours MT

1. Probably a reference to Cora Livinsgtone and an unidentified sister or other female relation.

2. Ecclesiastes, 1.14.

3. Ann Bolton, a friend of Mary Telfair.

4. Mary Telfair misremembered the name of the author, J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart*, 7 vols. (Boston, 1837–1838).

86 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 12 DECEMBER 1837

I wrote a half a dozen lines to you my dear Mary by the Trenton which sails in a day or two requesting that you will send on board of her for a box containing some of the products of our soils, and a pair of french China bottles of cordial beneath the gritts – as *ship* letters are sometimes mislaid. I mention it by way of *preface* to this.

I have just finished a letter of three pages to Geo. Jones and with tired hand and exhausted intellect I again wield my pen in your service. The trio are seated around a wood fire Sarah *ruminating* Margaret reading and I scribbling to one who I know excuses all *blunders* and *blots* as well as crooked lines.

As soon as I received your letter we went to see the Livingstones and have been repeatedly since. I was there this morning and saw the only one who appears except a child who told me she was the youngest sister. She interests me very much – she seems to feel very deeply her sisters situation but I cannot induce them to see any one, not even a Physician. I am going again tomorrow to urge her to get medical advice. Her sister she thinks becomes worse every day. She eats indiscriminately and never leaves her room – her cough is dreadful and her fever constant. I wish we could do more than send them delicacies and give them our sympathies. When sickness, sorrow and death come to us at our own homes it is hard enough to bear but when we are in a land of strangers with no dear familiar faces to look upon how truly forlorn and desolate are the feelings. I wish I could get access to the Invalids but they seem resolved not to admit any one. I fear that one will

very soon be released from mental & bodily suffering by the hand of death, I am glad to find that her sister is aware of the situation. It is so difficult to realize the idea that we must part from those we love. I heard that they had sent for Mr. Neuville the Episcopal Minister upon their arrival but I think Miss L. would have mentioned it to me if it had been the case. I think the society of a religious friend might do much towards preparing her mind for the solemn change that awaits her and benefit those who are destined to survive her.

When I returned home from my sad visit I found Mrs. McAllister here planning a musical party for tonight. I could not but feel the contrast – one half the world can form no idea of the desolate feelings of some of their species. They can sympathize for an hour or a day with those whose sorrows last a life time. If I had the journey of life to go over I would never choose my friends from the gay and worldly – you can only depend on them "when fortune smiles."

Mary Wayne is recovering her health but not her spirits – she is as hostile to society as ever and her Mother seems to enjoy it with the youth of sixteen. I heard yesterday that Anne Clays charge little Ellen Grey had been very ill with Influenza which has prevented Eliza from paying her promised visit to {*illegible*} Mrs. McAllister says Tom's wife has won all their hearts – but she talks so *figuratively* that I hardly know how to keep pace with her. She is an *oddity* and I long to see her *sobered* for there is much that is attractive in her character.

Your little God daughter is a very sweet child, her heart seems to overflow with love. She will have too much manner – which may recommend her to some, but I hate *mannerism.*

Do not forget to send me the number of your house and write very often. I have had so much to worry me that I have wished myself back to the "North Countrie" this proves that my back is not fitted to my burden.

With love to all dear Mary I remain ever yours MT

87 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 18 MARCH 1838

You prove yourself a *poor chemist* my dear Mary after the *analysis* of your letters, to discover *lead* instead of pure *unalloyed* gold – I do not profess to be acquainted with the *arts* & sciences but I have just had knowledge enough to discover what is *heavy* from what is *ethereal.* In future I will

receive no apologies for long silence without a good reason being assigned. I really felt too anxious about you and my busy imagination conjured up sickness & trouble as the cause of two long months silence. I seated myself a few days since with the intention of *refreshing* Frances's memory of me, but I was "under the weather" and said to myself it will only give her the trouble of replying to a dull, dull letter. Some writer says "give me old wine, old books, and old friends."[1] I assent to the last, for I find they are the only friends worth cherishing & can truly say with Logan that

> "No after friendships e'er can raise
> The endearments of our early days
> And ne'er the heart sick fondness prove
> As when it first began to love."[2]

I am glad to hear that Anna Bridgen *wishes* to be happy in her own country – though I was exceedingly amused & delighted with her *bold* ideas and satyrical humor. I was sensible that she had not the elements within her for happiness in a world where there is "no anchor for the affections" – She is entirely frank, but is she sincere? She wants "the milk of human kindness"[3] too much – I can never forget her Codwise portraiture. I do not expect to see Mr. Abiel again to discover his opinion of that Lady – The "lovely man" has been "*cherished*" in Bryan County by the Clays & Arnolds – I do not think our *romantic* plan will answer – He is too confirmed an Invalid to share his destiny with our pattern of Excellence – I agree with you in thinking that perhaps he would prefer a graceful persuasive manner like Mrs. C . . . for the best of men are ignorant of the *intricate* winding of the female heart – We are better judges of each other than men are of us – We see our own sex with minds *undressed* – they see them *decorated* for conquest – Is there any distinction in this world worth playing a part for – And yet how many even manoeuvre in a good cause – We live *out of the world* but are in a position to shew us human nature – When we meet I will tell you some anecdotes that will excite your wonder. I was reading a lesson of Jays[4] yesterday upon the very subject I have faintly referred to – He thinks ambition enters too much into the hearts of Christians and that their zeal in the cause of Society proceeds often from vanity – the pride of office enters even there – Anne Clay passed several days in Town last week – she paid me one or two delightful *tete a tete* visits. The freshness & originality of her mind is delightful –

her conversation equal to an instructive and entertaining book not *"french memoires"* but a fine moral essay. She realizes my beau ideal of a *public* unmarried Woman – The world has sett her upon a high eminence & she has strength of character & mind enough to sustain her upon the elevated height without danger of becoming dizzy and tumbling head-long from it. I love a *matronly* single woman – You know how I hate *classifying* people as old Bachelors and old Maids – the fact is persons classify themselves very often by engaging peculiarities.

I am pleased at being remembered by two such pure and gentle spirits as Mrs. Banyer & Miss Jay[5] – I hope if they are ever compelled to seek a milder climate for health that they will think of Savannah. I would not recommend the gay to visit it but quiet people who are satisfied with a soft climate, Evergreens, and social society might venture to come to it. – Have you read the letters of Charles Lamb,[6] if not, read them – You will be charmed with the beautiful simplicity of his character and the overflowing of a perfect {*illegible*} of affection for his Sister and his friends – I feel when I read his letters as if he was personally known to me – I love both Scott and Lamb because they are such noble specimens of Nature. I often think of the {*illegible*} which such kindred spirits must have in a world where their intercourse is unmingled by sin and uninterrupted by sorrows and disappointments. – Sarah is often indisposed she has just emerged from three days confinement to her bed – she will try your specific for Dispepsia. We enjoyed your history of the loves of two children particularly "the first gage d'amour" – The ancients would have augured a *fruitful* omen, from the *nature* of the pair. Mrs. B is an imprudent woman though kind hearted & social – people who act from impulse must be inconsistent – I have not seen Mary Wayne for three months – her health is much the same. Mrs. Wayne goes out now very seldom & Henry seems dissatisfied with life – I think (entre nous) there must have been some error in their early training – perhaps made to feel their own consequence too much – We must live a little for others. – The Parents seem to have found for a time the way to be happy but there is a period in human life when we are compelled to say "I take no pleasure in those things which once interested me."

Mrs. McAllister gave a musical party to Mr. Abiel there were four Clergymen at it – I declined to meet even the Clergy at a party – Numbers have a most depressing effect upon my nerves – I hear Mr. Abiel lay from

exhaustion on the sofa nearly the whole evening – He felt in the back room as quiet as we did at the *Fete Champetre* last summer when we took possession of the drawing room. If I was a Catholic I would desire no greater penance for my sins than to go to a party – Mrs. McAllister is gone to a country wedding – your God daughter acts as brides maid. I must conclude with a peice of gossip. Mrs. Pettigrew was hissed at the Charleston Theatre for screaming out to a young man in the midst of the performance so you would not come & eat hopping John with me last night I'll never ask you again {*illegible*} Woman.

Love to all from all write soon your own affect. Mary

1. She may have been quoting either Francis Bacon (1561–1626), *Apothegms*, no. 97 ("age appears to be best in four things – old wood best to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to trust, and old authors to read"), or, more likely, Oliver Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*, Act 1 ("old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine").

2. From a poem by John Logan (1768–1788) entitled "Ode on the Death of a Young Lady." This poem may be found in the sixth volume of Samuel Pratt, *The Cabinet of Poetry, containing the best entire pieces to be found in the works of the British Poets*. 6 vols. (London, 1808).

3. *Macbeth*, 1.5.

4. The Reverend William Jay, of Bath, England.

5. The Reverend William Jay's daughter.

6. Thomas Toon Talfourd, ed., *The Letters of Charles Lamb: with a sketch of his life* (London, 1837).

88 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 23 MAY 1838

My usual *promptness* my dear Mary has not been displayed of late. I have permitted your letter to remain long (for me) unanswered. My moods are often too sad to admit of my exercising my pen in an epistolary way – for I like to appear cheerful even on paper, but there are seasons of the year when melancholy reflections & associations appear to take possession of us entirely. With me the spring and autumn are the most gloomy seasons. I never prepare to leave home or return to it but with a faint heart. We require some buoyancy of spirit a little of Hopes sunshine to lure us to a momentary forgetfulness of "the unrelenting past."[1] We have both arrived at that sober period of life when new scenes and new characters

cease to charm & when old friends and *home* seem to be a refuge from the heartlessness of the world.

I received a very kind letter from Mr. Curtis Bolton inviting us to join his party composed of Mrs. Evans & his daughter to Europe. Our friends have urged our going but we could not do so. Sarah's health is better but still delicate.

We *talk* of leaving on the 13th of June for Baltimore & proceed on to New York from thence tarrying several days in Philadelphia to see my Cousins. The weather is so cool now that we feel no inclination to seek for cooler skies. The planters quake for their crops. Though I am so unfortunate to be a *Planter* I am never troubled about *failures* in that line. If like the Patriarch I can find food & raiment for them I never trouble myself about *money*. If there was no such thing in the world, people would be happier but the love of the *dollar* is an American vice. The reason is, it is our *aristocracy* – not *mine* for there is nothing in this world like a *finished* character. I sometimes regret that I can no longer fancy people great & good but in proportion as I see the faults of them. I see my own – this makes me lenient – "know thyself" ought to be a watch word with us all.

I am still reading Lambs letters by way of Episode to Josephus and Scotts life[2] – this is intellectual dissipation, but I find it impossible to *chain* down so desultory a mind as I possess, though the bump of order is so prominent. You & I may have *clear* phrenological heads for I believe *the old cheat* discovered order in you too but we are not *orderly* in every sense of the word. As I am an American I am privileged to use a *big* word and say my peucranium is often in a state of *conglomeration.*[3]

Your *wooded* information was tantalising – to be near you is a strong temptation but we told Mrs. Pearcy upon leaving her that we would return – and she was so kind to us that it would look ungrateful not to reply. Will Frances pass the summer in New York. We must seek a green retreat in August.

I suppose there is nothing talked of in New York but the great British steamers – what an eventful age we live in! I envy those who seem so elated by the various public improvements now pervading the world. I am afraid that I have no *utilitarian* spirit within me. I think that we were a happier & more virtuous people before wealth & luxury poured in upon us – before the revolutionary spirit was extinct.

I wish that you would write & direct your letters to me at No.5 Monroe Place Philadelphia care of Miss Telfair.

Our united love to all of your family. Your affect. friend Mary

1. William Cullen Bryant, "The Past," 1.

2. This may be a reference to Job Scott, *A Journal of the Life, Travels, and Gospel Labours, of that Faithful Servant and Minister of Christ, Job Scott* (New York, 1815), or to John Scott, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas Scott, rector of Aston Sandford, Bucks: Including a Narrative Drawn up by Himself, and Copious Extracts of His Letters* (London, 1822).

3. Here Mary Telfair is referring to the enormous interest in phrenological theories that swept the United States during the mid-1830s.

89 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 20 JUNE 1838

I wrote to you my dear Mary that we expected to sail in the Pulaski for Baltimore on the 13th – We had even registered our names on the list of Passengers and were making every preparation to go on when an unaccountable feeling came over me to wait for the 27th the principal inducement for delaying was that Mrs. Jas Hunter suddenly made up her mind to go on that day – and now that I look back upon the train of circumstances that operated to induce us to withdraw I can only say it was merciful Providence that arranged it all. I always feel a degree of sadness in leaving home & returning to it which I cannot express but on this occasion it was overwhelming I told my sisters that I felt as if a calamity was impending over us, and that I felt that I could not leave home – How strange! how mysterious are our impressions at times – Is it not a convincing proof that there is a communion between the visible and invisible – You dear Mary whose heart is always alive to the sufferings of human nature can imagine how horror struck we were this morning when the awful tidings of the loss of the Pulaski was announced to us[1] – so many valuable lives lost – only 23 out of 160 saved and among the number Mrs. Nightingale & her infant and one other Lady Mrs. Frasier – all the rest perished – Dr & Mrs. Cumming among those who have been suddenly and awfully summoned into eternity. I cannot tell you how their loss affects me – I have never harboured any feelings towards them of enmity, and truly can say that sorrow not anger at the past was all I felt & my prayer was that they might be shielded from trials such as we have bitterly experienced – I mentioned Elizabeth Bond

Mrs. Dunham in my last letter which I believe I destroyed or I may have sent it – she urged our joining Colo. Dunham & herself – and they too are gone – The whole of the Lamar family & Mr. Hutchinson too have met with a watery grave – The gloom cast over this place is great indeed – I hope that this solemn event will lead us all to reflect upon the uncertainty of life – Why do any of us cling to it so tenaciously?

You have heard me speak of Virginia Bryan who married William Mcay she with three helpless children perished – her Husband did not accompany her – and now has no relic of her – I have not heard of any of the Carolina passengers – I dread to hear their names as we have so many acquaintances in Charleston who leave it about this time.

I wrote to you a few days since telling you of our plans, but what are human plans! formed only to be frustrated.

I think now the Americans may give up all confidence in steam too many disasters have occurred and this last will make an impression too deep to be effaced.

My reason for writing to you to day was to relieve your mind as I think I wrote to you that we intended leaving on the 13th – How grateful ought we to feel to the Supreme Governor of all events with whom the hairs of our heads are numbered and not even a sparrow falls without his permission that we are numbered with the living while lives so much more valuable have been lost. Very truly yours MT

1. For contemporary reports of the loss of the *Pulaski* and the names of survivors and those who had lost their lives, see the *Wilmington (Del.) Advertiser*, 18 June 1838, and the *Macon (Ga.) Telegraph*, 2 and 9 July 1838. The *Pulaski* sank as a result of an explosion that destroyed its boiler.

90 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 27 JUNE [1838][1]

I received your letter yesterday my dear Mary dated *the ever memorable 13 June* tomorrow was the day we expected to leave here in the steamer Pulaski, Savannah's pride & boast – and where is it now! – and where the joyous beings who thronged her Decks?

Our community is plunged into woe – every countenance is sad – every heart is filled with grief – We can think and talk of nothing but the loss we have sustained – so many precious souls in the twinkle of an eye

ushered into the presence of their Creator – We look to second causes when we ought to look to the great first cause and say *"Thy will be done"* – It seems as if Death had entered every dwelling house here so profound is the sympathy for those who perished as well as those who survive – The newspapers will give you all the information – The most affecting circumstance of a private nature related there was the death of Mr. Wereat the Episcopal Minister & his Wife they were five days on a fragment of the wreck and died of exhaustion. He to the last moment exhorting & comforting them – His wife followed him in a few moments "They were lovely in their lives and in Death were not divided"[2] – We came out in the boat with them last autumn – He was a singularly gifted man and their attachment to each other was touching – They have only exchanged Earth for Heaven – they have left an only child in Maryland – she was a Miss Lloyd of that State – you recollect Mrs. Pringle who used to visit us in Newport – she was on board also Emma Drayton – they have not been heard of – I knew so many intimately they had been the companions formerly of my happy hours – Poor Elizabeth Bond! when she bade us farewell I said to my Sisters how I envy her that buoyancy of spirit that seems to enable her to rise above misfortune – Her Husband had just heard of the death of his only child a Son on the eve of marriage which she felt deeply for her sensibility was acute but like Mrs. McAllister a buoyant temperament kept her from despondency. The Demeres her first cousins are in the deepest affliction she was like a Sister to them – Our visit to them was very distressing – Last Sunday our Church was clothed in black – but the sermon seemed to come from the head – It wanted pathos. – The one prepared was not delivered because hope was entertained that many who were considered lost might have been rescued – but I fear that their hopes were groundless, for nothing has been heard to cause any one to cherish hope – I will not dwell any longer on this painful subject but trust that we may all derive a lesson from it, that there is but a step between us and Eternity – Nothing but Mary Waynes irresolution kept her from going on the 13th – Her Parents urged it & she could not towards the last make up her mind to separate from them – Another Individual a most valuable man (like ourselves) took his passage & transferred to the 27th – I feel as it was a great trial to go to sea after this awful calamity and if the weather was not so hot would propose to my Sisters to go up the Country – but I think the risk of fever

very great – It is so many years since we remained so long in a Southern climate & today is most oppressively warm – Mr. & Mrs. Jas. Hunter going in the Tybee induces us to go – she sails on the 5th of July – We have had a storm every day for three weeks incessant rains, thunder, lightning and high winds. Sarah's health is better but she is miserably thin. – I feel as if I could become inured to heat after a few weeks & we might get along here by care – that is avoiding the sun & dew & paying proper attention to diet – I think for unprotected timid women there is no place like the shelter of ones own roof – particularly when they have no pleasure in any thing. – Pleasure has been long banished from my vocabulary. If it was not for the few ties of kindred & friendship the world would be a perfect blank to me To meet you & yours again & to see my Cousins affords a gleam of sunshine amidst the dark clouds that surround us – We feel so much alike that one cannot encourage the other – I feel as if my energies were paralyzed & I could not move the day after the sad the heart rending intelligence was received in Charleston a large party of Ladies went in the Neptune alleging as a reason the prosperity of their city depended upon supporting steam boats – Well I have no pride in any thing no public spirit – I never wish to see another Steamer leave this shore – but I would have given hundreds to have sent a vessel after the catastrophe if only it was to bring the dead to shore your affect Mary

1. The date of this letter is indicated by further references to the *Pulaski* disaster.

2. This is probably a misquotation from a poem by Thomas Campbell entitled *Gertrude of Wyoming* (London, 1809) that read "Twas sung, how they were lovely in their lives, / And in their deaths had not divided been."

91 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 24 DECEMBER [1838][1]

This is christmas dear Mary when all the world here are preparing for their family feasts. We three are seated in our quiet parlour drawn close round a large wood fire for the weather is intensely cold and no sound invades my ear but the report of pop guns – Our Plants are all covered with moss which gives them a hoary look – They are my pets and I hope will reward me with new sweets when Spring unfolds her charms – You have no doubt heard of the originality of the Blacks – My old Gardner gave me a specimen of the *metaphorical* the other day – He asked me if it was not

cold enough to put the bonnets on the plants, and what do you suppose the bonnets are? The matting of grape jars – We had a delightful visit a few evenings since from Anne Clay – We met in Mrs. Philips's room, and I *decoyed* her in here – She was in her happiest mood and she made me for several hours *forget myself* unfortunately Judge Wayne came in to interrupt our *duaretto* Anne became *stately* and he *Judicial.* – I dont think he will ever say to her as he does to me *"My child"* – or "we *pour* women" – she certainly inspires profound respect in the Lords of creation – Her love of a joke reminds me always of Frances – Tom Clay has a Son – it is called Joseph Clay – With what joy he must have been hailed – reviving a name so venerated and loved by them all – I have seen Miss Henry several times – she took a drive with us to Bonaventure last week she seems to be very amiable and easily pleased – She was delighted with the woods and moss – I have requested Catherine Bulloch to call & see her Mrs. Hunter and Sarah Cecil have been I fancy there will be no gaiety here this winter – The loss of the Pulaski has thrown a gloom over this place that will not soon be dissipated and ought not – alas! the vacant seats in Church bear testimony to the loss of many – "The places which knew them once shall know them no more."[2] – Mr. Tillotsons friend Mr. Henry has just left us which visit caused me to suspend my scribbling – Now that I do not read at night I am glad when any one steps in to tell us of what is passing in the busy world – We literally live in seclusion I have been enjoying the society of Wilberforce for the last week – what a man and what a Christian! – I think that his letter written from the manse of Mr. Unwin addressed to his Sister is one of the sweetest effusions I have ever perused – so full of piety love and tenderness – Fame is a word almost blotted from my vocabulary, but if I dare apply so *worldly* a word to the pure & holy Wilberforce I should say that I would rather have his fame than any mans that ever existed. – Will you send about five or six days after you receive this letter to Mr. Anthony Barclay No 2 College Place for a package directed to you – It contains a french embroidered muslin collar which I had intended should reach you by new years day – I regret to hear of Joe Wallace's situation – How mysterious it seems for so good a man as Mr. Wallace is, to be so afflicted but "we see through a glass darkly."[3]

I have just received a little christmas offering from C. Bulloch – she calls me Mary Lamb so she sends me a pathetic little tale by Charles Lamb – she

says to make me weep – I need no stimulus for that – Give a great deal of love to Frances my next will be to her after the hollidays are over for while they continue I feel too sad for any thing but to ply the needle – as it is past 10 near the witching time of night I will say farewel your affect Mary Love to your Mamma & Matilda I am afraid that your'e twin is getting rheumatic – such a pain in the wrist

1. The date of this letter is again indicated by reference to the *Pulaski* disaster.

2. This may be from Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*. The original reads, "For the long days lay up full many things nearer unto grief than joy; but as for thy delights, their places shall know them no more."

3. 1 Corinthians, 13.12.

92 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 30 MARCH 1839

I have seated myself this vapourish morning my dear Mary to hold a long parley with you, and to thank you for your box of souvenirs which arrived yesterday. They are all beautiful. As for the Lamp, it is exquisite, quite classic enough for Mrs. Jamieson to put out the bright ideas on paper beneath its soft radiation.[1] Sarah requests me to say that the simplicity of the Cap suits her taste. I say "the Cap fits her and she will wear it." Margaret desires me to say that MCT looks beautifully on vellum paper and that if she had an elegant beau she would be tempted to put her manchettes[2] upon him, but being beauless will sport them herself. MLT and Alberta desire their thanks for your kind remembrance of them. We went into the country yesterday to pass the day – while Sarah was arranging crockery in the closet.

I read aloud "Winter Studies in Canada" – like every production of Mrs. J. it is very interesting, but she writes like an unhappy disappointed woman and there is something *contagious* in misery. She is a woman of deep feeling, but not well regulated in fact nothing but strong religious principle can regulate that sort of sensibility which expends (without exhausting) itself, upon every object animate & inanimate. You trace her history in her writing. She must have some decided fault to cause her Husband to neglect her. Talent in a woman when it is connected with a good temper must have unbounded influence over even a wayward man and I suspect that she realizes a remark I once heard Frances make that softness of manner in woman

was a cover for art – I have found it in so many instances. Mrs. Jamieson is said to be all softness – there is a trite remark that "still waters are deep" and she is said to be *infected* with the *Virago* – you will enquire what has become of my Mantle of Charity.

I have been interrupted by a note from C. Bulloch requesting her thanks for the Manchettes – she remarks "they just suit my dress." I am now about giving you some gossip alias news. Eliza Smith intended visiting Mrs. Genl. Smith in St. Augustine – who could have believed that Anne Cumming could live so long away from her family! General Smith must be all the world to her. I hear that Joe Cumming is delighted with his third wife – who is a plain, sensible, *resolute* woman – she is remarkably deficient in personal attractions. Deliver this jeu d'esprit of her Hero of other days Colo. Cumming – tell her not to repeat it to Anne Wallace – when Joe invited him to his last wedding he excused himself by saying that he would attend the next – how characteristic of a Cumming! Ridicule seems a component part of their nature.

Mrs. Wayne has withdrawn entirely from the gay & Mary has reappeared among them. The Judge[3] has returned from Washington as fat as an Alderman who lives on Turtle Soup – His visits to us are not *Angelic* – He comes very often and *unburthens* himself – I believe that we understand him better than he does.

I often wonder at the interest some people take, or appear to take in me as I do not possess *that sort of fascination* they value. I am like the Aeolian Harp, silent unless I come in contact with (not the fresh winds of Heaven) but some *Man* or *Woman* who strikes some chord in union with mine – I am afraid that you will think I have taken lessons in egotism from Mrs. Buckingham.

Have you read the life of Mrs. Hawkes compiled by Revd. R. Cecil[4] – I think it will interest you deeply I have just commenced it. I am also reading the second life of Hannah More[5] – what intellectual dissipation! Two such books at one time – but I have given up the needle for the present.

I look upon Miss More as the greatest Benefactor to the human species that ever existed. Garricks death seems to have been blessed to her he seemed the link that bound her to that Society which seemed to worship her talents[6] – His death seems to have awakened her to a sense of the danger of applause & determined her to consecrate all the energies of her powerful mind to the interests of Religion & virtue.

Have you seen the Boltons since their return? I suppose that they remain very quietly at their cottage. Mrs. Evans is absorbed in them – She lives out of herself and is always at work to promote their interest – Poor Mrs. Phillips I wish that she could find as many objects of interest. I never look at her without assessing those lines "That stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow, To view each lov'd one blotted from lifes page, And feel alone on Earth as I do now."[7] Some who are not alone in the literal sense feel so in heart and mind – but I will check my pen and with love subscribe myself truly yours MT

1. Apparently a reference to Anna Brownwell Jameson (1794–1860).

2. A manchette is a glove cover worn by fencers on their weapon hand.

3. Judge James Moore Wayne.

4. Catharine Cecil, *Memoirs of Mrs. Hawkes, late of Islington: Including remarks in conversations and extracts from sermons and letters of the late Rev. Richard Cecil* (London, 1838).

5. Probably Henry Thompson, *The Life of Hannah More* (London, 1838).

6. This is a reference to David Garrick, the English actor (1717–1779).

7. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* Canto 2.

93 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 19 JUNE 1839

By way of atonement for past silence my dear Mary I will give you my *lucubrations* upon long paper. I have just received your last letter and will answer your question what I am doing. This morning I cut out ten waistcoats & expect to continue the trade for several days. You will think that I take time by the forelock when I tell you these waistcoats are for *Christmas presents* and are to be made by one of our Femme de Chambre during our absence – I never plan for myself but my life would stagnate if I did not employ my hands & fingers a little for others.

We have had melting weather but I have *weathered* it extremely well, what with frequent bathing a luxury I enjoy most *at home* and a drive at sunsett – with no light at night but that reflected from your glass lamps we continue to *cheat* the heat of some of its fury.

On Monday accompanied by C. Bulloch we went at 5 o'clock in the morning to Montgomery 12 miles from town on the sea to aid Mrs. Telfair's family being there for the benefit of Margaret's health who had a most tedious illness & looks wretchedly. It is a sweet spot immediately upon the

river and contains four houses & boasts of a number of magnificent old oaks covered with moss. I recollect being taken there when a child and playing on the green there with Anne Wallace – I think we staid at Mr. Wallaces – I remember Sarah & myself playing *Mams* with Mary McLeod at a little table – our Hostess handed us some tea in tiny cups of pewter – it was cold water brown sugar & milk – Sarah spit hers out *I swallowed mine* – my ruling passion the fear of offending, being strong even in childhood – as I walked in that Piazza I thought of that scene, and I thought of the changes made by death – all swept off and the Dwelling now a Tavern – Who can grow old with a light heart?

I am glad you have seen poor Mrs. Philips she has need of sympathy – I have never known a more grateful & affectionate heart – I wish that she had *a home* however humble – her benevolence can always find objects to exercise her affections upon – she adopted Mr. Elliott six years ago he was studying for the ministry with a view to go to instruct the Heathen and was so devoted to her that one could scarcely realize that he was her son only by adoption – I am glad to hear that Mrs. Henry is better – There is a report in circulation that Mr. McAllister the Father of Mrs. Tho. Clay is addressing her cousin Miss Charlotte Henry. I wonder if she will consent to be his fourth wife – He is very rich, and a very good man that is all I can say in his favor – I am still *romantic* enough to think that it is better to marry a poor man for love, than a rich one for money – I wonder if Mr. Ward is *cured* of his love – it seemed an *incurable* case when I last saw him in company with "his Queen." I hear that Anne has been on a visit to Mrs. Francis.

We have engaged in the Trenton she will sail in the course of ten days perhaps not until the 1st of July. If Margaret goes with us we shall be but a very short time in New York we must make our way to Newport where she can have a bracing climate. If it was not that I want to see you all, and Miss Rushford (for I have not a summer garment) I should like to pass by the hot city and visit it in September.

I am now enjoying a delicious breeze and looking out upon the Magnolia in full bloom at my window and umbrageous oaks. James left us in *high dudgeon* with three hundred dolls. in his pocket. His complaint was that his Coffee was not strong enough and that our servant Friday fancied himself the greatest Gentleman in Savannah and looked down upon him. We were

glad to get rid of him for a more irritable temper I never knew. I hope that we shall be able to get one when we go on that will suit us better.

Mrs. Genl. Wayne has taken her spouse to Charleston to live. He had not the means of supporting her here. What a miserable match – she leaves him and his children there and goes on to her mother for the summer poor Soul her aim was to get married and his to get a fortune. I wonder when we look into the motives that lead half the people to assume the matrimonial yoke that there are as many happy couples as we meet with in the world.

Farewell love to all and believe me to be your Mary

94 NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, 2 AUGUST 1839

We had a very smooth and pleasant night on Monday my dear Mary, so very tranquil were the waves and so gentle the breeze that we passed point Judith without the consciousness of turning that prominent point – at eleven o'clock the moon poured her calm light upon us and we landed at Newport at 7 o'clock and are now at Mrs. Rathbones where the Minises lodged in Thames Street – a horrid situation and noisy, but the house is clean and our Landlady very kind and obliging so much so that we dislike the idea of leaving her, particularly as she is a woman of limited means and has known better days. The only boarders besides ourselves are Mrs. Griffith (the betrothed of Sam Stiles, and a Mrs. Hamilton of New York – who is a Virginian Lady and *entre nous* full of pretension) I do not take to either of them. The Margarets go into the surf and enjoy it. I have not ventured in yet, but have engaged an *old* man to duck me. We have received calls from all the Bostonians here who seem to be clever people some of the elite of Boston among them. They are the only people that I feel *safe* in renewing old acquaintanceships with.

The New Yorkers with the exception of *l'ancien regime* I steer clear of, they are so heartless and flippant. Newport is cool when every other place is warm – we wear our cashemere shawls and find them very comfortable. Mrs. Francis and suite arrived yesterday and are located in a cottage on the third beach.

George Jones has made a great bargain in the purchase of lots here and intends to build on one. Sarah & Margaret are disposed to do the same but I want enterprise – the fact is I have lost all my enthusiasm and do not feel as if I could be *wound* up to any thing I am like a watch that has lost its

mainspring. So the cottage will end in talk if it rests upon my decision. Milton said *one* tongue was enough for a woman & I think one *Home* enough for a woman – every *addition* where the affections are not enlisted gives trouble. Poor Mrs. Sukeley's adage often raps at "the countless chambers of my brain".[1] Every thing has its opposite, and I am very sensible that a boarding house however private "chills the genial current of the soul," and domestic feelings can only flourish under the shelter of our own roof. I am fancying you at Rhinebeck enjoying "rural quiet, friendship books"[2] and the view of the noble Hudson with all the varieties of mountains, hills, and dales.

Miss Hannah More said what was true when she asserted that the last feelings that linger around the hearts of old persons are the love of flowers and of children. I am quite too old to enjoy what is termed *pleasure* and so are you, in that respect we keep pace but I enjoy Nature and the society of my friends more than I ever did but I cannot read away from home. Volumes are devoured in my own quiet room in Savannah where pages are read elsewhere. Does that not speak in favor of *a cottage* – somewhere if not at this second Isle of Wight. This is a *feminine* place fifty women to four men at Miss Mumfords 9 women to *no man* in this house – this you will say does not suit my *Capuchin* taste. What a gossiping must be kept up. Mr. Stout & Mrs. Gracie rumor avows (and you know she has a forked tongue) are said to keep up a *brisk volley* at Mumfords.

I heard a piece of wit of a Georgia Lady – which I will give you for your edification – she said she disliked Newport because all the Houses were *Hen* Houses – for my art useless *Roosters* have *ideas*. I would rather dispense with the flapping of their wings and idle crowing.

I long to hear how Frances and her bairns come on, and will write to her when I feel settled. As I am on wing for the Beach my dear Mary I must say adieu with love from all and a full overflowing portion from your affectionate friend Mary.

1. Rogers, *The Pleasures of Memory. In Two Parts*, 2.171.

2. The first quotation is a variation on "and froze the genial current of the soul," from the thirteenth verse of Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard;* the second is from Thomson, *The Seasons,* "Spring," line 1158.

95 PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, 27 OCTOBER [1839][1]

Your letter arrived this morning & I regret to find that my letter written a few days since had not reached you – I hope by this time that you have received it and know the cause of my silence – I have had another attack similar to the one I had in New York but it has passed off – We have had most afflictive intelligence since I wrote to you – the sad presentiment I had in taking leave of Mary that we should never meet on Earth again has been fully realized – on the 7th of October (a sad day to us) her spirit left its earthly tenement and is now I trust rejoicing in a happy eternity – She had not made this world her portion and her end was peaceful & resigned – Her child was very ill when she expired but was pronounced out of danger when Mrs. Terrill wrote – Mrs. Telfair too had been ill but was on the recovery – How much I regret that we were not with her to afford her assistance & sympathy – she has had her trials and this last is a most severe one for Mary was her favorite child she was so old in character that she entered into her mothers feelings and was a dutiful & affectionate child – Poor Margaret's grief is very great – she reproached herself for leaving home but in all probability she might have shared the fate of her Mother & Alberta[2] if she had remained for Dr. Habersham said that she could not survive another attack of fever such as she had last spring – the only thing that reconciles me to the separation – We only wait to hear favorable accounts of the health of Savannah to return to it – We are very retired here – we have a private parlour in the third story & see no one but my cousins & Mrs. Jones – The former visit us twice a day. The last accounts from Savannah were very unfavorable – several cases of yellow fever & the warm weather there must aggravate the disease unless it is averted by a frost.

I am writing by Twilight so I fear that you will not be able to make out this scrawl – I will answer your letter in a day or two – Have no *apprehensions* about me – I never was in less danger – Remember us affectionately to your Mamma and Frances Your truly affectionate friend Mary

1. The date of this letter is indicated by Mary Telfair's reference to the death of her niece Mary Eliza Telfair Cobb on 7 October 1839. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 432.

2. Here Mary Telfair is referring to the death of her niece, Mary Eliza Telfair, and the life-threatening illnesses of her sister-in-law Margaret and grandniece Alberta.

96 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 25 JANUARY 1840[1]

Your *provokingly* short letter my dear Mary I received by the *Madison* also the Box of preserves which arrived in *good condition* for which the trio thank the donors. The Plumbs *full of association* – No.231 Ninth Street[2] – the noble Hudson New Burgh all passed in rapid succession thro "the countless chambers of my brain."

I am shocked at the flight of time since we separated – Our spring near at hand for in February our buds begin to appear in the woods while you are encrusted in ice and snow.

What shall I say to you to amuse or interest for we are so *detached* from the multitude that we are like people on an Island – an old friend steps in occasionally of an evening which interrupts our reading, and that is the extent of our *dissipation.*

I thought of you on Sunday and wished that you had been my companion. I went in the morning and again at night to hear Mr. Fuller a Baptist clergyman once a Lawyer and highly esteemed at the Bar for his talent – He belongs to *the aristocracy* of Carolina and I recollect him fourteen years ago an Elegant fashionable young man just from College – about 6 years ago he became seriously impressed and has ever since devoted himself to the cause of Religion He is a very solemn Preacher, and appeals very strongly to the feelings – he relates anecdotes in the Methodist style and his zeal and animation exceeds any one's that I have ever heard. I think that you would prefer him to Mr. Williams.

Miss Henry (the Wilkes's relation) was led to the Altar yesterday morning by Mr. McAllister the father of Mrs. Tom Clay – she is his fourth wife – It seems that he *fetched* upon her to fill the vacancy the moment that he saw her. – I have always considered him a weak man but he has displayed the Wisdom of Solomon on this occasion for she possesses those cardinal virtues so essential in a Step Mother – Her temper is said to be unrivalled for sweetness economical, industrious, and prudent – what more could he require? Sarah Cecil says she is *without a fault.* His last must be his best choice – He is said to be very rich. He bore her off in *the old Ballard style* to his Plantation where all his family were assembled to greet her – she will be a near neighbor of Anne Clays. It is singular what good luck follows some men. – The predecessors of Miss Henry were all *southern fortunes* – two of them *Beauties* – but I believe that they were all passive characters –

so according to my estimate of female *worth*, the last without a cent is the highest prize that he has drawn in the matrimonial Lottery.

I saw little Mary Cummings a few days since she informs me that the {*illegible*} were about removing from St. Augustine to Augusta. I suppose that will make all round happy.

I wrote a few lines to Frances by the L. Baldwin – that day I was *all business,* buying, shipping, cutting out work etc so that I had no time to *talk* with her – you know my penchant for *talking* letters, so I hope that you will profit by this hint and give me a long *talk* and let me know all your proceedings. – Mrs. Nutall is the gay leader of fashion here – Mary Wayne I hear is the gayest creature in the Place. What a contrast to the scenes at West Point! The Mother has retired from the world but enjoys silently the gaiety and the triumphs of her Daughter – Sarah Haig says Mothers with Daughters on the Tapes are no companions for their contemporaries – I believe there is some truth to the remark – our combined Love to your Mother Frances & Matilda Truly your friend Mary

1. This letter is headed "January – 1840" and postmarked 25 January.

2. A reference to one of Mary Few's homes in New York City.

97 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 26 JANUARY 1840

The very day dear Mary that I dispatched my letter of *complaint* to you yours of charming length arrived to atone for the *provoking* brevity of your *Madisonian* letter, and to illuminate the dark walls of our oak room, which candles & lamps fail to enliven. Next to that true light which is the only safe guide through the wilderness of Life, and "the dark valley of the shadow of death"[1] comes the light of sympathy & friendship, it makes us forget for a while the cares and trials of life.

I wish in reality that we had you at our fireside that we might have some of those confabs which we enjoyed last Autumn together. It is too unsatisfying to my nature to act the Swedenborgian towards you, as I have always taken more pleasure in listening, than in talking to my "Siamese Twin." Whenever I stroll alone I wish that you was my companion, & I never see a beautiful flower expand to the warm sun, but I wish that Mary Few had it. The pure white Japonicas are now blooming in the open air, and we have delicious weather.

My enjoyments are now *few* and *simple*. It is very true that after we have known sorrow in its most blighting form, that circumstances the most agreeable, have a depressing effect by recalling past happiness. "Trifles light as air"[2] strikes upon the chords of memory like the breeze upon the Aeolian Harp – so much is Life made up of associations & recollections and happy they who are too much engrossed with active duties to dwell too intensely upon the past.

We often talk over Newport and New York scenes – they are unmixed with sadness. There was something in the *incognito* life I led in the latter, very agreeable to my taste. Were I a Poet I would sing the attractions of an Omnibus. I often think of my independent trips to Ninth Street – when I felt as happy *for the moment* (for happiness is only momentary with me) as the French Woman who told me she was truly happy for she had not a *sense* (cent) in her pocket – but to return to my subject – a large City has many advantages over a small one – The freedom from restraint, the consciousness of our actions not being commented on, and our remarks repeated, gives a sort of independence to our movements. The mantle of reserve is more apt to envelope us in small, than large communities. I am odd in one respect, I never feel that old acquaintances understand me any better than new ones. Many an individual leaves this world after a long sojourn in it, *a stranger* in its most emphatic sense. I believe that we *understand* each other my dear Mary, and I hope that you will say of me as Cowper did of England, "*with all thy faults I love thee still.*"[3]

Your sketch of the Bridgens was true to Life. I think I see Anna surrounded by admiring listeners. Madame de Stael says that there is no arena in which vanity displays itself in such a variety of forms as in conversation – she spoke from experience as well as observation. I think with you that Kitty ought to have had a *Pilot* to have directed her *light* barque, and sheltered her from the *Rocks* and *quicksands* of single life. She has a kind heart, but wants tact and dignity. The fact is, people who talk for talks sake, must say much that ought to have been *unsaid*. What a pity that blowers could not be invented for the mouths of the indiscreet as well as for the grates – some of our friends would be too much muffled. The blower would never be off. I begin to think that good sense comes to more in holding our tongues, than in talking well.

Your intelligence respecting Mrs. Douglass Creeger amazes me. I thought her just heartless enough to sail through life with a man she did not care a

sou for and he seemed a mere *Lackey* – she needed no *pilot* but gold – no anchor but silver it needed not this example to convince me that *sterling principle* is more requisite as a bond of union in married life, than *sterling pounds*. Have you heard the cause of this projected separation? He must have played Truant to *Love* or *Money* to have tempted one so ambitious of the worlds approbation, to take such a step. I heard it whispered when they were off Ballston that "*separate apartments*" were requisite and I am old fashioned enough to condemn that modern innovation. We are becoming very foreign in our taste & habits. The simplicity of our Forefathers would be called vulgar – for my part I love every thing that is *old* even to furniture I even think old folkes have more heart in the present day than the young ones. I never talk of the degeneracy of the age except to one or two of my contemporaries. You & I can look back to our Greenwich days, when *Calculation* was only understood in Arithmetic, now children *lisp* (not in numbers) but *such a one is so rich*. Last winter a little child at School said Alberta need not *learn fast* – she was so rich that she might be a long time at her studies. Have you ever known such an instance of *precocity*. It is enough to make the rich envy the poor whose children may escape contamination in one way.

I read an account of Mr. Ward's funeral in the Herald (*entre nous*) I think the decoration of his lifeless body was dreadful. I never can associate parade with feeling. If I were connected to his Children I should be rejoiced at his having left so little compared to what was expected.

"The Empress of Florida" Mrs. Nutall[4] gave a brilliant dinner last week I had a description of it from George Jones – she is quite the leading star to the widowers upon whom she *beams* but has no idea of resigning her liberty. Truly yours MT

1. Psalms, 23.4.
2. *Othello*, 3.3.
3. Cowper, *The Task*, Book II, "The Timepiece," line 206.
4. Mary Wallace Savage Nuttall. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 248.

98 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 5 APRIL 1840

Brevity may be the *soul of wit* my dear Mary, but it is certainly not the *soul of letters* and such is my *avarice* on the subject of long letters, that I could give you a scold for sending me so short a one. I like to write from

the spur of the moment before the sparks of enjoyment become dying embers.

You may imagine our surprise at seeing Anne Wallace a few mornings since in the Market Square walking with Ben Stiles – we hailed her and tried to lure her home with us but as she had decided upon going out to the Clays the following morning she consented to take a drive with us to Bonaventure and returned & passed the evening with us – she enjoyed the sight of our shrubbery (the rose being in full bloom) and seemed to have enjoyed her visit to the Cummings at Augusta, and talked a great deal of Cousin Williams fascinating talent for conversation related one of his refined anecdotes which if my memory does not fail me I will relate to you next summer you always make me *a Raconteur*. Mrs. Gray is at the Clays, we expect her in next week to pay us a visit. Mr. Bolton (the reverend) met her here the morning of her arrival. You know what a creature of association I am – the sight of them together carried me back to my childhood and I thought of "the loves of youth that are no more."[1]

We had two more interesting visits from old Bishop Chase[2] – he reminded me at times of your Mamma and of Dr. Stoughton and Judge Johnson. His second visit was in the evening he staid from six to ten. Mr. Bolton happened to be here – they talked on religious subjects.

Bishop seems to be very evangelical and perfectly devoted to his calling but he is *tinctured* with the bigotry of his sect. I went to hear or rather *see* Bishop Ives[3] consecrate the new church – he gave an eloquent & appropriate Discourse on the occasion but asserted that the Episcopal was the true church handed down from the Apostles for my part I think if we go to the *root* of things that the Baptist is the true Church for our Lord himself was baptized & his Herald was a Baptist – however form is nothing – it is the spirit alone that can purify the heart.

I have been coining money, not necessarily with my hands, but *with my brain* – this enigma requires solution. Louisa Bulloch applied to me to assist in writing letters for the Episcopal Fair. A Post Office was established at one Table and she was *Post Mistress*. I took *the dignitaries* of the land to write to, and under the feigned name of Agnes was traced and had a beautiful note sent to me with a ten dollar bill another replied to another of my letters with a five dollar gold piece – so much for moderation I simply marked 25 cents on the back of the letters with an encouragement to be moderate in exacting from others!

You have heard of the death of Mr. Green. I sent a message to Miss Mary Green – to know if she would see me as she passed through but she declined doing so Neto went to see her – how deep must be the affliction of his family! He has left a son & his wife expects to have another very shortly.

I have been reading "Hazlitts Table Talk" and prefer it to *Coleridges*[4] the latter is too *mystical* for my taste – I cannot enjoy what I do not perfectly comprehend – Life is too short for *refined subtleties*.

We hear the New York news occasionally through Mrs. Francis's *Post office*. Mrs. McAllister and herself keep up a brisk *cannonade* and you know Sarah Haig made a *grand* discovery a few years since that *"the Siamese Twins"* were fond of a little Gossip. Anne Wallace told me that she was afraid of becoming a professed News Monger such was her passion for collecting news to amuse poor Joe who looks bright and happy. I told her to beware – for a Miss Cabbot in Boston used to clear off directly after breakfast until dinner, to collect news to amuse an old Father & Mother who never went out – the consequence was that she became so *expert at her business* that she was the terror of her acquaintances.

Your "cheek music" must possess a charm for the Judge to draw him from his gay acquaintances. I am as much opposed to the union of the religious with the worldly man – as the union of church and state. You & I often see with *the same eyes* – a proof of our friendship. It strikes me as it does you that a long residence at *"the far South"* has dismantled him of some sterling qualities and (*entre nous*) the value sett upon *wealth* & *shew* is inordinate – still he is an intellectual man & I think you may *extract* much information from his mind when the *dulcet* tones are raised to *concert pitch*.

I wrote to Matilda a fortnight since has she received a box containing 6 Georgia Hams which I shipped in the Brig Lamar. I hope that we shall see her previous to her departure for Sullivan County.

We think of leaving here in early June. I must put myself into the dreaded *Inquisition* and indulge Parmley's *torture* which will hasten us on a fortnight earlier than usual. I regret to hear that Mary Chrysties health is not good. I wish that I could have mustered her energies and brought her out – such a fine opportunity to some.

Mrs. Gray & Anne Wallace Catherine Bulloch and ourselves are going on a little expedition to *the Isle of Hope* on Wednesday – you will say I thought Mary had done with *hope* and *anticipation* and so I have for believe me that

I live upon *realities* and the only *romance* that is left in me is my love for my friends.

I have never been able to get Mrs. Savage's life[5] do you in your frequent visits to the Book sellers if you see it secure it for me – my passion for Biography continues – Hazlitt says after *looks* determine our character that words & actions may be {*illegible*} but the eye tells the truth. I do love to look upon a face where truth is impressed upon it – then it may be called "the human face *divine*."[6]

Mr. Bolton says that Mr. Wm. Wallace is the very image of Mr. Wilberforce – whenever I read of such men as Wilberforce I feel as if I had a previous knowledge of them – it is an odd sort of *second sight* – how do you account for it?

Our friend Judge Wayne is on the recovery. He still classes himself as the {? *foremost worrier*} while with us. We ought to congratulate him according to your french anecdote. Truly your friend. Mary

1. John Logan, "Ode on the Death of a Young Lady," line 32, from *Poems* (1782).

2. Bishop Philander Chase (1775–1852) became a member of the Episcopalian Church in 1799 and in 1834 was appointed the presiding bishop of the entire Episcopalian Church, a position he retained until his death in 1852.

3. Bishop Levi Sillimen Ives (1797–1867) was ordained a priest in the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1823, and in 1831 appointed bishop of North Carolina. He was greatly interested in education, particularly the religious instruction of enslaved people. In 1852 Ives converted to Roman Catholicism.

4. William Hazlitt, *Table Talk: Essays on Men and Manners* (London, 1821); Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Specimens of the Table Talk of the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1835).

5. Probably John Bickerton Williams, *Memoirs of the Life and Character of Mrs. Mary Savage* (London, 1829).

6. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 3.40.

99 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 13 APRIL 1840

A rainy day my dear Mary is favorable to darning stockings, gossip, and writing letters – I have just put a bobbinette dress upon Milton to protect him from the rude touch of unpoetical fingers and am tired of the society of Lord Brougham's[1] great men – apropos what a sweet Portraiture he has drawn of Carol of Carolton and he has given a more favorable

sketch of Madame de Stael than any other of her Biographers he has thrown the mantle of Charity over her weaknesses and made her very interesting. There is something in deep attachments that always touch my heart, and hers for her Father seems to be interwoven with her nature you would not suppose that so worldly a woman and one so dazzled with her own brilliant reputation, could have felt for any one so pure and strong an attachment not even for a Father, *as holy as the tie is* – well I suppose every one has a redeeming trait in character if we can only discover the hidden treasure under the rubbish.

What is New York coming to! The vices of European Cities seem to be polluting its fair face. Mrs. March's *legerdemain* has confirmed me in my *physognomical* faith – that eye of hers expressed any thing, and every thing but truth. If I were a *"Coelebs in search of a wife"* I should be almost afraid of making the selection from the circles of haut ton for fear of not getting an *honest* woman there was a time when I thought stealing and lying confined to the uneducated, but I have lately become so enlightened as to find the latter very common among persons who stand very high in society – alas! poor human nature – it is "frail as the leaf upon the stream" – "and changeful as a summer dream."[2]

The Winter is gone and Spring is decorating the woods with garlands of Jasmine and the roses are blooming in our court – Mary Few is in bud – she is *a wonderful creature* – three times has she taken root after being transplanted – now her position is such that no rude branches can molest her – her neighbor a beautiful variegated Japonica was stolen from us a few nights since.

If seasons have a cheering influence I should hope that this beautiful season would cheer us. We have had a winter of gloom – we have literally been plying between Mrs. Telfairs and our house – she is up again but looks wretchedly – poor little Louisa whose situation I mentioned in my last letter is no longer an inhabitant of this earth.[3] I was by her when she breathed her last – it seemed like one sinking into a sweet sleep, and she had that angelic look that seems a promise of future happiness. Her Parents were inconsolable. I have known Womans grief equal to the Mothers, but never Mans like the Fathers – it was overwhelming. I trust that they will derive support in this deep affliction from the only true source and that we may all derive a salutary lesson from it – when we see the young, the beautiful and the promising snatched away suddenly by the hand of death –

we naturally ask ourselves the question why we are spared – good children are the greatest earthly blessing but there are other ties as strong as those which bind Parent & child – so much depends upon character situation in life disposition – some feel losses keenly for a time, and with others the feeling deepens with years.

I have written you a gloomy letter my dear Mary but I generally give you my mood, however sombre.

I think Mr. & Mrs. Barclay[4] must feel the misconduct of their children – what could induce Matilda to form a clandestine marriage![5] I saw it announced in the Herald there are rumors afloat here that her parents opposed it because her betrothed was discovered not to be rich – money may truly be called the root of all evil.

The Empress has just returned from Florida and found her Beau French Wilson here ready to receive his fourth refusal – *Mr. Tillotson will say she was right* to say no.

We have had no lectures to regale us this winter. I have seen but one new face and that early in the winter – our friends are all occupied within their own domiciles one confined, another has friends staying with them and so on so that I have had no *"cheek music"* since I left you.

Has the Judge paid you a visit lately, and do you find him agreeable. He will remind you of your old admirer Dr. Smith – *but all Virginians are alike*. Louisa Bulloch thinks that there is something of romance about him – I think *entre nous* (for walls have ears) that with his black gloves on that he might pass for a Jesuit. He is really very intellectual and seems to possess good feelings but I cannot understand him and I perceive you read him no better than I can.

You are as much detached from the fashionable world of New York as we are from that of Savannah. I heard last Sunday an excellent sermon from Mr. Preston[6] on the influence of fashionable amusements on the heart. In order to preserve a fresh, natural and independent character one must avoid scenes where the higher powers of the mind, and the kindliest feelings of the heart slumber.

I went a short time since with Catharine Bulloch to visit a poor woman aged 94 – a Swiss Protestant who has been bed-ridden for 4 years – she was in early life a Governess in an English noblemans family and now dependent upon the charity of a few. Catharine thinks that she is more grateful for

a little *talk* than for "the crumb that falls from the rich man's table."[7] Her memory is unimpaired and her spirits good. The poor generally speaking are happier than the rich.

I wish I could have been with you the evening you passed with Mrs. Banyier & Miss Jay to have felt their sweet influence – ask them if they know Miss Sally Rutledge[8] – she reminded me in her conversation & manner continually of them.

I intend consigning this to the claws of old Neptune so it will be an old story when you get it, but not a *long* one – were I a Queen I would attach a penalty to every rigmarole story told in my hearing – promptness in action and brevity in tongue come next to the cardinal virtues. Love to all Truly your friend, Mary.

1. Henry Peter, Lord Brougham (1778–1868), the Scottish-born lawyer, journalist, and parliamentarian who became lord chancellor of England. The reference is to his *Historical Sketches of Statesmen Who Flourished in the Time of George III* (London, 1839).

2. This is a misquotation of "Vain as the leaf upon the stream, And fickle as a changing dream," from Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, canto v, stanza 30.

3. Here Mary Telfair refers to the death of the fifteen-year-old Louisa Terrell. Louisa was the daughter of her close friends Dr. William and Mrs. Sarah Terrell of Sparta, Georgia. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 105.

4. Barclay was the British consul in New York.

5. A reference to the Barclays' daughter, rather than to Matilda Few Tillotson.

6. Reverend Willard E. Preston was the incumbent of Savannah's Independent Presbyterian Church 1831–1856.

7. Luke, 16.21.

8. Probably Sarah Rutledge (ca. 1782–1855), the daughter of Edward and Henrietta Rutledge of Charleston, South Carolina, and the author of *The Carolina House-Wife, or House and Home, by a Lady of Charleston* (Charleston, S.C., 1851). Sarah Rutledge never married.

100 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 27 MAY 1840

It is not *Foolscap forever* my dear Mary notwithstanding our late *adherence* to it – This is simply and ostensibly to notify to you to direct your next letter to Philadelphia, where we expect to be on the 6th of June if no accident occurs, or no detentions on the way.

There we shall tarry (for our Cousins society one week) not for our own gratification for it is a place I cannot like – the very atmosphere (dont think me uncharitable) breathes formality, stiffness, & coldness an atmosphere uncongenial to my nature for every day I value freedom from the trammels of conventional form more & more – You do me justice when you say that a cottage would suit me & I may add without a *double Coach house*.

Margaret says I must tell you that she has lost her passion for the pomps & vanities of life – I tell her that she has caught it from me she says not, that Experience has taught it, which is the best Teacher. Oh what lessons does she teach – I can safely say that there is no *gloss* left upon any thing for me – Do you know that I have even had my bonnet revised & corrected here, that I may have no chasing after Milliners & if the Work Woman had not had too much in hand I should have had not even a visit to pay to Miss Bughford. I had determined to give myself up to you & Frances – last night as we three sat in a nook together listening to the storm of wind & rain I broke the spell by telling one of C. Bullochs jokes, and we had a laugh a rare occurrence with us. Sarah begged me to treasure it up in the store house of my memory for Frances, who we think values jokes as highly as a miser does gold – Sarah Cecil says she always fancy's her as she once saw her under the influence of Momus – Sarah Haig has been much indisposed – Dr. Waring[1] paid her two visits & confirmed Dr. Raes advice – He says that we are going on a week or fortnight too soon – she has had a cough but traces it to taking off her flannel handkerchief that she has worn all winter she is a Dispeptic but not consumptive however I am very anxious about her – she is the thinnest person I have ever seen and so depressed yet goes on fulfilling all her domestic duties she says that she must be occupied.

Little Berta goes on with us – she is a perfect object having lately had a billious fever – she is delighted to go and I hope that she will be improved morally & physically – I want to get her in the surf at Newport and then for half the day to a good school where only half a dozen children go – kept by a most respectable young Lady – We hope to benefit her – How I wish that the Boltons would have her for 10 years but her Grand Mother will never part from her & the climate would be too severe for her. Leigh Richmond says what is very true "A good school is better than a bad house but the best of schools is a good House."[2] What a responsibility to be a Parent and how few feel it who are Parents – Some of them *unconsciously* are *female*

Herods. Your account of the *matronly* virtues of Mrs. W Fr pleased me much – Truth & order cannot be too early cultivated in Children establish the first and they may get along – and yet some of the most interesting characters I have ever known have been strangers to order – but I never yet knew one who failed to tell the truth that was not despicable.

I wish that I possessed the descriptive talent of Miss Bridgen that I might dip my pen in La Coaleur de Rose and describe *the Wedding* to you.

On Monday at 8 o clock in the morning *before our* break fast we were at the Episcopal Church *Toujours* it being my motto we went at 1/2 past 7 – the ceremony commenced at 8 – There were 70 persons present below, and the Gallery pretty well filled with family Servants – two of ours took advantage of {*illegible*} & went. We were all seated in pews near the altar in silent expectation when the chancel door was thrown open & the bridal pair locked arm in arm entered followed by the near relatives of each – Four generations stood before the Altar. I am losing my *nerves* for I was *unmoved* until a *thrill* came over me when I saw the child looking like an angel – its face bathed in tears and as white as the cambric frock it wore. – Its Mothers thought I will have other objects to share her love – it is better for you and yet its feeling was too touching – When Mr. Neufville pronounced George & Mary man & wife the dear little creature burst into tears & said afterwards that she had no Mother unless people would call her Mary Jones it was not right for her mother to have a *name* different from hers – She has had a fever since & our servant has just returned from enquiring after it – He says it is still very sick how unfortunate. – Sensibility may be called any thing but a blessing – it makes even Childhood miserable – The Bride & Groom went off to Charleston an hour after in the steamer – We with Mrs. Savage *her child*, and *our child*, & maid Juddy are to join them on Monday next – The latter has been preparing her *toilette* for the last week while we have been toiling – she takes it very leisurely and says she loves Home better than the *Norrard* but is willing to go – I hope attending to Berta will relieve her from the *Mal du pays*.

How sorry I was to hear of the death of young de Rham in Charleston – he got his illness by going into the country with Audibon[3] to shoot birds – certain death to a stranger to the climate – Adieu I hope to get a letter from you before I leave – I cannot lose sight of that cordial to a drooping spirit – With love to all yours Mary

1. Dr. William R. Waring, a Savannah physician who died in 1843.

2. This is a misremembered phrase from the second chapter of Richmond's *Domestic Portraiture*. The original reads as follows: "I have long thought that a good school is better than a bad home, a good home is the best of schools."

3. John James Audubon (1785–1851), the ornithologist. It has proved impossible to identify de Rham.

101 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 11 NOVEMBER 1840[1]

Your letter dear Mary was received yesterday – need I say what a cordial it was to the "way worn Traveller"[2] – We left Philadelphia on Saturday reached Baltimore at 4 oclock enjoyed a comfortable nights rest – went on Sunday to hear Mr. Johns and was delighted he is as fervent as Mr. Fiske and even more distinguished for simplicity – On Monday we received visits from old acquaintances, the little West Point *Witch* among the number Henry Wayne accompanied her – It is supposed by the *Seers* in Cupids Court that *Fate* is busily engaged in weaving their destiny – The Papa's & Mammas will be charmed with the union – It is refreshing now a days to see people marry without money on either side for then we must say it is a match of affection – this is the only *remnant* of romance that clings to me – We left Baltimore on Tuesday and travelled rapidly under a serene sky by day, and a refulgent moon by night – "Sleep that knits the revelled sleeve of care" claimed me so completely that I lay upon the floor of the Car with a carpet bag for my pillow and slept profoundly to the amazement of our little party who occupied a small car with seats so narrow that we could scarcely preserve our *equilibrium* – my *natural Tournure* was in my way for the first time in my life.[3]

We found the Wilmington Boat full to overflowing and were glad to rest our wearied limbs upon the Cabin floor – This going to & fro prevents fixed habits if no other good results from it –

We tarried one night in Charleston and reached our home on friday night between 8 and nine oclock – no one to welcome us but servants – silent, dreary, and desolate it always is for weeks – we three took our tea around the hearth – you might have heard a pin drop – about 8 oclock Catharine Bulloch & her Husband came in – Hall & Mrs. McAllister We tried to rally our spirits but could not – every change is saddening what in youth gives buoyancy in after life depresses – Mrs. Wayne called to see

us yesterday – she seems to have been *married* over again in her daughter whose husband is ordered to Washington – he is a Surgeon in the Army – Mrs. Wayne goes also – They intend clearing out from this place and *boarding* for the rest of their days – What a mystery is human life – her daughter marrying a Savannian is the means of uprooting them from this spot – Mrs. W is changed but I think her interest in the affairs of *state* will revive when she gets into the White House by the side of Reynard alias Van beuren[4] – Henry Wayne is appointed aid to Genl. McCoomb & is to be stationed in Washington – I shall look out very anxiously for the Whisperer and will after I have seen the first paper endeavor to contribute my mite towards it – [5]

Your sketch of the Judge made me laugh and realized Mrs. Minots remark that he had been asleep twenty years. How he will *flourish* with the *Savans* in Paris – I envy him his introduction to Dr. Chalmers[6] – I hope the *"old fashioned gallantry"* will be dropped and that he will greet Anna Bridgen on his return with some *new* airs – I left New York and Ninth Street this autumn with more than usual regret – every year binds me closer to the friends I love – My spirit is with you every evening as you surround the tea table where we were wont to enjoy ourselves so much –

I have grown very old in one respect I can only enjoy myself now with those I have confidence in – Miss Bayard is a marvel to me nothing could induce me to go under similar circumstances to a foreign land alas! timidity early marked me for her own and I often wonder how I can muster courage to learn to leave the shelter of my own roof but I must leave my *confessionals* or you will think me a confirmed egotist.

"The independent troop" the Clays arrived the day after us I wish we could have fallen in with them but they took the Richmond route and we the Norfolk –

I saw in Baltimore the beau ideal of my youthful imagination Commodore Warrington[7] the shock was equal to Mrs. Tuckers when she saw hers – Time is a sad innovation and changes the human Form as much as it ravages the human heart – The Hero of other days looks like a round tower – as broad as he is long – but I found the *inner* man very charming and what is matter compared with mind, and what is physical beauty compared with morals. Our most affectionate remembrance to your Mamma & love to all Truly yours

1. Dated by postmark.

2. Possibly from Thomas Green Fessenden, *The Ladies Monitor, A Poem* (Bellows Falls, Vt., 1818), 20.

3. A tournure is any device used by women to expand the skirt of a dress, a bustle.

4. This is a reference to Martin Van Buren, U.S. president 1837–1841.

5. A weekly newspaper founded by Mary Few and some of her New York friends.

6. Presumably Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847), founder of the Free Church of Scotland and its first moderator.

7. Lewis Warrington (1786–1851) entered the American Navy in 1800 and was awarded a congressional gold medal for his service in the War of 1812. Later he served as commandant at Norfolk, Virginia, and Pensacola, Florida.

102 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 22 FEBRUARY 1841

The Evening Star

By Joseph John Gurney[1]

Thou radiant star of the darkening west,
Thou diadem in the train,
Of the sable Queen whose velvet vest
Envelopes the dewy plain;
Gladly I hail the mellow light,
That from thy centre flows,
And gaze with joy on the diadem bright,
Thy circling beams compose.

How steady is each pencilled ray,
How calm thy vestal flame,
Sent by the glorious monarch of day,
From age to age the same;
Thy lamp is hung in the Heavens above,
In the midst of ethereal blue,
Of the Church redeemed by a Saviours love,
Perpetual type and true.

When sorrow o'ershadows each temporal gem,
Of mans uncertain story,
The Church lights up her diadem,
And travels her path to glory;

And why so pure and steady the ray,
That illumines her race of duty,

Because from Christ the fountain of day,
She has borrowed all her beauty.

I need not tell you my dear Mary that the first page is intended for your weekly paper if you would send me a number I might contribute, but I do not know exactly whether grave or gay, moral or severe suits best the character of the Whisperer. My imagination is so limited in its range now, that I find it difficult to unlock the portal of my brain so much are its hinges *rusted* by sadness.

If you could peep at our trio *planted* down in one spot, with no cheerful associations you would wonder how I could even *squeeze any* thing so *huge* as an *Omnibus* out of my contracted brain. I believe that I have not laughed but once this winter, and that was elicited by some droll remarks from Catharine Bulloch. We must have been under the *black* cloud together but gloom does not prevent me from wielding the pen *although it does you.*

Poor Mrs. Henry! the newspaper announced the sad fate of her Son, what a death! I am sorry, very sorry that Frances could not muster her energies to bring Mary to breathe a balmy spring with us – I am sure that the change would have been beneficial. Has F. heard from her friend Miss Bayard. I feel some curiosity to know what impression the old World makes upon her mind and if there is any chance of her recovering her health. There is no danger of her becoming *a la Bridgen unsettled* for the future as she does not seem to live upon excitement. I wonder that Anna Bridgen does not seek your society. In spite of her keen Satire I feel an interest in her – there is so much of frankness and independance about her. The life of such a Woman ought not to be an *objectless* one. Some people require being *chained* to their duties as the galley slave to his oar. I could not but remark the perfect contrast between Mrs. Banyier & herself the evening we met there – how can such opposite materials amalgamate into friendship.

We emerged from our Winter seclusion last week, and took a family dinner at Mr. Robt. Habershams – since the *wedding* I have been nowhere, and felt like a lost sheep straying into a new pasture when I entered into their spacious drawing-room – It was my good fortune to have Bishop Elliott[2] next to me (he is a Nephew of Mr. Richard Habershams) and the very best specimen of a Southern Gentleman that I have seen for years. He talked

delightfully on a variety of topics, religion blended with them all – It seems uppermost in his thoughts. As a Preacher I think him superior to Mr. Kirke Dr. Hawkes or Mr. Bethune – Simplicity & sincerity mark him for their own – He is just the sort of Man that you would approve of for in him is taste genius and sensibility – all consecrated to religion – His Wife is congenial in every thing *but looks* – she is very plain & he very handsome – but I have lived long enough in the world to estimate the treasures of a pure heart and a fine intellect beyond all personal ambitions. How is Dr. Washington – He lives in Sarah's heart as his *name* sake does in that of true Patriots not mere *Whigs & Loco Focos.*

Mrs. McAllister told me I lost a great deal by not meeting Colo. & Mrs. Whiting – it was a clerical party five Clergymen with their wives sacred music the evenings entertainment – she says that Colo. W. is remarkable for his piety – she eulogised him very highly in other respects but she views nothing calmly or dispassionately – for my part I must know people before I can trust them – It has been a perpetual *schooling* with me not to judge too hastily of people or be taken with *fine sentiments* – Some folks have a *Catalogue* of them that they deal out to those they *imagine Green Horns* I have been *duped* so often that I am constantly disposed to cry out *deeds* not *words.* – Have you received my scrap letter and the *three story* cake – Thank Margaret for her sweet letter – Love to all. Your affect. Mary.

1. Joseph John Gurney (1788–1847) was a prominent English-born member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). A committed social reformer, Gurney campaigned against slavery during visits he made to the West Indies and North America between 1837 and 1840.

2. Bishop Stephen Elliott (1806–1866), a South Carolinian who first trained as a lawyer, was ordained a priest in the Episcopalian Church in 1836 and served as Rector of Christ Church, Savannah. Five years later he was consecrated the first Bishop of Georgia. He was an editor of the *Southern Review* (1828–1832) and professor of Sacred Literature at South Carolina College (1835–1841).

103 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 5 MARCH [?1841][1] RANDALL PLACE

How mutable are all earthly objects, and what a sad innovator is Time! – his touch is like the magicians wand, for it transforms Forests into Cities, and levels hills into plains. – The active, bustling Citizen, who

figures in the great Drama of Wall Street, calls this *levelling* system, the march of improvement, while the contemplating lover of rural beauty considers it Natures requiem over the loss of her precious antiquities. – This street is so charmingly situated with its collonade of fine buildings was (within the recollection of some of its inhabitants) a lovely and secluded place – hallowed by Memory as the scene of many a childish sport – There the weeping Willow waved its melancholy branches and the birds carolled their sweetest songs. – The wild rose bloomed almost unseen, and "the milk white thorn" scented the evening gale.[2] – The chief attraction of this interesting spot to the children of the neighbourhood, was a green mound covered with locust trees, whose fruit yeilded readily to their eager grasp.

On this fair domain, "an antique mansion burst in awful state" but silence reigned within its walls "and desolation saddened all the scene", for its solitary Master had long been "gathered to his fathers."[3] Tradition affirmed that the spirit of old Randall wandered nightly through the neglected shrubbery and silent halls of the fine old mansion, What a charm had this legend for the wondering ear of childhood![4]

> "'Tis now become as History little known
> That once we called the Locust Tree our own"

If you deem the above *stuff* not too insignificant for the Whisperer you may make use revise & correct it – but let the Author be the *little* unknown – I hope that your Mama contributes to the columns of the Whisperer – How I wish I could be present when the weekly paper is read – Turn Sweedenborger for the time, and imagine me by your side listening and laughing – I find it a great effort to indulge in the latter for every day makes me graver – I am not here the same Mary Telfair that you see in Ninth Street – there I live and breathe the present – here in the past. – We have had a fortnight of gloomy weather, and I have been "under the weather" Anne Clay paid us a long visit yesterday morning and was very animated and agreeable her spirits are perennial – She came in to witness the consecration of the new Bishop her friend Mr. Elliott – I attended it and was deeply interested in the ceremony – Bishop Meades Sermon was *perfect* – He is a plain Evangelical Preacher and thrills the heart while he awakens the conscience – not one metaphor and scarcely any gesture – yet the attention is rivetted by the solemn truths that he declares. I have never heard a Presbyterian or

Methodist Preacher denounce the pomps and vanities of the world more than he does all public amusement and private *revellings* and banquetting as he styles evening parties and very justly – He denounced fine furniture, and ornaments in *dress* as unbecoming the professor of religion – I told Margaret I felt as if I could have *gouged* the solitary diamond out of my brooch – Anne Clay from her account was undergoing the same *process* at the same time she said shall I take the flowers out of my bonnet but on reflection she thought that she would continue to wear them – If I had not been for some time past impressed with the *nothingness* of this world's baubles the Bishops sermon would have made me sensible of it – but admonitions more deeply felt than the words of any Preacher prove that they are "miserable comforters."[5]

You will sympathize with me when I inform you that my beautiful Oleanders have been killed by the frost – They were the pride of the Parterre – I may truly say "I never loved a tree or flower but twas the first to fade away."[6] – Now I shall not write to you again until I get a letter from you bad delinquent as you are – before I close my letter I must remind you of a scene – which my silly peice may recall to your memory – while you & I were pulling at the locust tree – Sal our Story *teller* – called theres Old Randalls Ghost coming – with that we scampered home as swiftly as our fleet legs could carry us – poor Sal what a fascinating power she had over us. – Our love *pure unalloyed* Love to the dear inhabitants of Randall place alias Ninth St. Truly yours Mary

1. The reference to the consecration of Bishop Stephen Elliott indicates that this was written in 1841.

2. From the second verse of a poem by Robert Burns, "Lassie Wi' The Lint-White Locks." It is unclear in which edition of Burns's work Mary Telfair first came across it.

3. The phrase "an antique mansion burst in awful state" is from Samuel Rogers, *The Pleasures of Memory*, 2.284; "gathered to his fathers" is to be found in Apocrypha: 1 Maccabees, 2.69.

4. Misremembered from lines 52–53 of William Cowper's "On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture out of Norfolk," included in his *Poems* (London, 1798). The original reads, " 'Tis now become a history little known, / That once we call'd the pastoral house our own."

5. Job, 16.2.

6. Lines from Thomas Moore, *The Fire-Worshippers*.

104 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 18 MARCH 1841

I regret dear Mary to hear of the situation of your precious eyes, and hope that they will soon be restored to their wonted strength. I am so much the loser, that even selfish considerations might prompt me to desire this but your own comfort depends so much on the free use of "*the Souls Interpreters.*"[1] We quite enjoyed your letter both the serious and the playful for I am *tremblingly* alive to both.

Your Mamma must have an intuitive knowledge of the German language to be able to translate "keep this side up" – it quite puts us non Linguists to the blush. – We had a reminiscence of Sing Sing this morning in a call from Genl. Ward the *irrelevant Colonel.* – Father Time has added flesh or more *genteelly* speaking corpulency to his figure but not impaired his good looks – Entre nous in *mannerism* he is almost equal to Judge C but no soft, low *tones*, he is no *Whisperer* though he might furnish some sketches for the *Whisperer* – I was afraid to ask after Mrs. Ward as "*Men get into the habit of losing wives*" and he did not advert to her. I am very timid after the lapse of years to enquire after any ones relatives, and for that reason often appear indifferent when I am not – Does not feeling often make us appear unfeeling? We are "wonderfully and fearfully made"[2] and what historys if hearts could be read would they unfold. – but to return to *the General* he was accompanied by a senior General Vanderlin I think he called him – probably a Sing Singer.[3] I entertained him while Sarah found talk for our old acquaintance – He complimented her "on the order upon which our {*illegible*} seemed to be kept and said that he should take *lessons*[*"*] He ought to have complimented the Servants instead of Madame Haig as every thing is left to their mercy now a days – we are *concocting* the subject whether to ask him and his old dutch friend to a primitive *dish* of tea to morrow evening for the kindly fire of hospitality has been extinguished so far that only congenial spirits rekindle it – This is my confession – you must give me absolution of it – The *General* intends calling to see you and politely offered to be a bearer of my letter – I have too much of *Scotch* sincerity to send this by him – you remember the old Highlanders remark, "I canna break bread in a mons house & laugh at him afterwards" – so after my *free* account of the *Soldier* & *Statesman* I would not dare to make a *Mail* of him – I hope that you approve of the principle. – Anna Bridgen would laugh at my conscientious scruples.

I am truly sorry to hear of the increased indisposition of Mrs. Banyier and Miss Jay – it proves that the good must have their share of suffering in this life – I heard of a melancholy death lately – you recollect Miss Gadsden – she was returning from a long walk and fell upon the ice – was assisted into a cab by some Gentlemen who were near at the time she gave her address was taken to her bed and without any external injury gradually sunk into the arms of death – her Physician apprehended no danger and while her spirit was passing from Time into Eternity those around her dying bed thought her fainted. The deaths of people are as different as their lives – while severe struggle mark the departure of some, others pass tranquilly through the dark valley of the shadow of death. Miss G. was the only friend my cousins had in Philadelphia, they kept up almost a daily intercourse and her loss will create a sad vacuum in their affections. I do feel much for their desolate position; It is very difficult at this period of life to form new friendships – I have seen very little of Mrs. and Miss Hoffman – the latter is quite restored to health and is said to be affianced here – they appear to get along very well – I hear of their dining & taking tea out very frequently – The last visit they paid us I enquired of Mrs. Hoffman after poor Maria Laight – she said that she spent 5 days with her at Goshen and that she had become immensely fat – her history might "point a moral and adorn a tale"[4] – Tom Clay has another son – I hear that his wife & himself are a pattern of domestic felicity. I am glad to hear that the elements favored Miss Bayard and hope that la couleur de rose may continue to shed its tints over her pathway on the land as well as the waters – I do beleive that the river of legend and of lays, the fair famed Rhine would call forth that long lost tint for me – I see everything now so exactly as it is, and all objects but those of nature are so faded to my eyes that to awaken a powerful interest in any spot would be a new feeling – Mr. Wilde while in Italy celebrated the Georgia sky in verse[5] – so perhaps I might when on the Rhine talk of the noble Hudson and its verdant shores. I have not read old Tile's message I have many *messages* of a different nature to attend to truly yours Mary

1. "The soul's interpreters – the eyes" is from Byron, "To a Beautiful Quaker" (1806).

2. Psalms, 139.14. The original reads "fearfully and wonderfully made."

3. It has proved impossible to identify General Vanderlin or Vanderlyn.

4. Samuel Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes: The Tenth Satire of Juvenal Imitated*, 1.221–22.

5. Richard Henry Wilde (1789–1847), the Georgia poet and politician who lived in Florence between 1835 and 1841. Mary Telfair may have been referring to his poem "To Miss – " (January 1838), which begins "Fair daughter of the West! whose cloudless skies / And gorgeous suns I may no more behold."

105 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 14 MAY [1841][1]

I had just finished a letter to you my dear Mary when one arrived from you so I will destroy my wretched scrawl and answer yours – It was my intention to have acknowledged the receipt of your box of beautiful presents when Sarah was attacked with fever – she neglected her cold and it ended in Pleurisy – for three days Dr. Waring visited her three times a day he managed her care very well but I was afraid Sarah's eulogies on Dr. Washingtons skills might not prove *musical* to his ears – our friends were so very kind that they (one at a time) were with us day & night – as for Catharine Bulloch she was unremitting in her attentions – had her nourishment made at her house. Her Cook excelling ours in *gruel making* – My friends ought to value me as I look upon them as *the best gift of Providence* – Dr. Waring seems to think that Sarah ought not to go farther north than Pennsylvania (for which you know I have no love) suppose you ask Dr. Washington what he thinks! I shall not be willing to leave here while her cough continues – she is such a frail body so little *stamina* to resist disease – so you may imagine how very anxious we feel respecting her.

The Whisperer has been duly appreciated several of the pieces are beautiful – I traced your Mammas pen in several and Mary Few in more than one. What a pity you could not get Mrs. Garretson to contribute to it – I think that the well educated women of her day write with greater facility than those of the present – In fact they were more strongly imbued with sentiment and there is something so interesting in pure *unadulterated* sentiment – The system of fashionable education so prevalent now, is calculated to crush that beautiful flower of the heart before it expands – I could not but give a tear to poor Birdy – he was so identified with you all in 9th street.

Yesterday the obsequies of President Harrison were *performed* – for it seemed a *performance* A little child observed that it was the first *false*

funeral that she ever attended – I have an instinctive aversion to parade and always feel sad at the season of public celebrations – I understand that Judge Berrien delivered an Eloquent eulogy in our church, and that Braham sang a requiem. If departed spirits are permitted to witness the scenes of Earth – how insignificant must the homage of Mortals, to a Mortal appear, particularly if he whom they eulogize is enjoying the glories and honors of the eternal world – Cowper says what is true when he asserts that "the only amaranthyne flower on Earth is virtue, The only lasting treasure truth" – I feel as you do about the past – Reminiscences are only of a pleasing nature when the friends who shared those scenes with us are our fellow {*illegible*} – but when those we loved are removed from us there is a shroud cast over the past and I often wonder to hear people of feeling tell amusing anecdotes and speak of the dead as if they were living – they are all the happier for it – I hear that the Unitarians are remarkable for it – their religion must be favorable to stoicism. – Mrs. Hoffman leaves on Monday – her daughter is positively engaged to a young Pennsylvanian McAllister – he is *lucreless*, what will a New York Mamma say to that? – I do not think it an objection if a young man is prudent and industrious, and the object of his choice economical under these circumstances a couple can with safety marry for love – but woe to the ambitious and extravagant who *dream* of love in a cottage. I have relied on Mrs. Hoffmans good nature to take charge of a Paris Apron which {*illegible*} early in the winter for Mary Chrystie {*illegible*} meet with no opportunity to send it – I believe that she likes a little bit of fashion she would not be a young girl if she altogether spurned it. What is Frances going to do this summer I wish that we could be located at some place with her – Dr. W says Sarah has had bronchitis so that I do not think as far East as Newport will suit her – I should be delighted to fill Mary Telfairs Chair at one of your *whisperings* – your books are a bonne bouche – the Martyr Lamb is sweet I have just commenced it – Penhurst of all places I should like to visit the abode of Sir Philip Sidney[2] the beau ideal of my youthful imagination – how I should enjoy the sight of those venerable oaks that sheltered a head worthy of a crown – but which was happier without one.

We had a long *lounging* visit from Judge Wayne this morning – He will be a Grand papa in august he belongs to the *Piozzi School*[3] – *he will never feel* old – How much more gracefully women grow old than men? – the fact

is I never saw more than three dignified men in my life but do not *whisper* it or I shall loose *popularity* with the lordly tribe – poor Anne W I am sorry for her folk, she must live, move and have her being in Williams child – it seems to have snatched her from an *objectless* existence – farewell love to all yours truly MT

1. The date is indicated by the reference to the funeral of President William Henry Harrison, who died in office on 4 April 1841.

2. Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586), the English courtier and poet.

3. It is unclear whether this is a reference to the composer and music teacher Gabriel Piozzi (1741–1809) or to the Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827).

106 WASHINGTON, D.C., 2 JULY 1841

David has just arrived my dear Mary with your letter & book – thank you for both. We hope to derive much gratification from the {*illegible*} Margaret Davidson[1] – We have been sighing for an interesting book – I purchased in Baltimore Dr. Grant on the lost tribes but have not yet commenced[2] – We thought that when we got in our Cabin one would read while the others worked – It is a great disappointment after all our arrangements to become your neighbors were made to give up 9th street and all its comforts for the Springs but as you say it seems providential for so many years it has been recommended for Sarah but we like Mr. Chrystie shrink from new places and new associations – A sadness comes over me at every move, and I may truly say "at each remove I draw a lengthening chain."[3]

We arrived here on Monday afternoon and had a direct *run* in the cars from Baltimore – the Country looked so fresh and the air so balmy, that I drank it in as a sweet draught Sarah is improved – she went to see the Patent office this morning & took a drive a few afternoons ago – her cough & wheezing still annoys her though the latter is declining – she is the thinnest person I ever saw & I sometimes think that it is impossible for the flesh to return to her bones poor Catharine is in bed with a head ache. Mr. Bulloch is enjoying himself in visiting the Gardens & the Senate Chamber he has a passion for flowers & brought some beautiful specimens for us to look at this morning – The Georgia delegation have been very attentive in

calling & offering to conduct us to see the Lions – I have been satisfied with hearing them *roar* in the Senate – The Bank question is now discussing with great warmth We have heard Mr. Clay – Benton, Rives[,] Buchanan, and several others of inferior note – Mr. Clay I prefer to any – he is clear & concise & perfectly natural – I now wish to hear Mr. Calhoun & then I shall be satisfied with *Senatorial* eloquence.[4] Richd. Habersham seems to enjoy public life and its *empty* honors – I am glad that none of these things move me – were I a man I would rather be Washington Irving beautifying my grounds, and *raising chickens* than Mr. Clay receiving the plaudits of admiring crowds – There is an excitement in political life that seems to swallow up the finer feelings – I doubt if politicians love their wives and children as much as other men. They have scarcely time *for talk* – Mr. Rives sits next to me at dinner and gives me his *cheek music* freely – He is very agreeable and *free from flourish* – There are two young Members in the house & a Lady & Gentleman from Philadelphia – I received a bow of recognition from Mrs. Tyler in the lobby of the Senate chamber yesterday[5] – she looked sad I heard a friend of hers say that she had no enjoyment in the grandeur that surrounds her & that she behaves sweetly in her new situation very modest & retiring – I do love people who can bear prosperity meekly – We went for 10 minutes to the House of Representatives and there witnessed a *melancholy* sight – John Quincy Adams seated among boys – he seems determined to swallow the *dregs* of public life how much more dignified to act *the Patriarch* and "*sit under his own vine & fig tree*."[6] Retirement is good for the young, but to the aged its blessings seem indispensable – my notion of a great man is measured by his disinterestedness & benevolence – no man can be truly great who is not truly good – I have no confidence in the politicians of the present day – *cunning* & *intrigue* are their *watch words*.

I will write to you from the Spring & let you know how Sarah comes on – I rather think that we will be in New York the middle or last of August we must avoid the cold air of the mountains in time – Never have I encountered such heat as we have here – I have not been able to sleep from its excess – yesterday we had a shower which we hope will have more than a temporary effect on the atmosphere – Sarah says that when we go to *the lobbey* to morrow she will write to you by way of occupation she wonders how Catharine, Margaret & myself could sit & hear men *wrangle* for 5 hours

our love to your Mamma & to yourself in which Catharine B. unites poor soul every thing is so new to her that she was enjoying it when a head ache prostrated her – your affect Mary

1. Apparently a reference to Washington Irving, *Biography and Poetical remains of the late Margaret Miller Davidson* (Philadelphia, 1841).

2. Asahel Grant, *The Nestorians: or, The lost tribes: containing evidence of their identity, an account of their names, customs, and ceremonies; together with sketches of trade in ancient Asyria, Armenia, Media, and Mesopotamia, and illustrations of Scripture prophecy* (London, 1841).

3. A misquotation of "And drags at each remove a lengthening chain," from Oliver Goldsmith, "The Traveller or, A Prospect of Society."

4. Henry Clay (1777–1852) was a U.S. senator from Kentucky (1806–1807, 1810–1811, 1831–1842, and 1849–1852), and speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives (1811–1814 and 1815–1821). From 1825 through 1828 he served as John Quincy Adams's secretary of state. In 1824, 1832, and 1844 Clay was the unsuccessful Whig candidate for the presidency.

Thomas Hart Benton (1782–1858) saw military service during the War of 1812. Upon the admission of Missouri to the Union, he was elected in 1821 as a Democratic Republican (later Jacksonian Democrat) to the U.S. Senate, where he served until 1851. An unsuccessful candidate for reelection in 1850, he returned to the U.S. Congress three years later, where he served until 1855.

William Cabell Rives (1793–1868), a Virginia-born lawyer, politician, and diplomat, served in the U.S. House of Representatives (1823–1829), and from 1829 to 1832 was U.S. minister to France. Upon his return to the United States, Rives served three terms in the U.S. Senate. From 1849 to 1853 he resumed his diplomatic career, again serving as the U.S. minister in Paris.

James Buchanan (1791–1868), of Pennsylvania, was elected five times to the U.S. House of Representatives and was a U.S. senator from 1834 to 1845. In 1856 he was elected president of the United States and served a single term.

John C. Calhoun (1782–1850), of South Carolina, served in the U.S. House of Representative (1811–1817) and in the U.S. Senate (1832–1843 and 1845–1850). He was vice-president under both John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. Calhoun is perhaps best known for his opposition to the federal tariffs proposed by the Jackson administration and his espousal of the doctrine of nullification.

5. Letitia Christian Tyler (1790–1842), the wife of then-President John Tyler.

6. John Quincy Adams (1767–1848), the son of John and Abigail Adams. A diplomat

and politician, Adams served as the sixth president of the United States (1825–1829). Following his defeat to Andrew Jackson in 1828, Adams was elected to the House of Representatives from his native Massachusetts. He served in that capacity from 1831 to his death in 1848.

The quotation is from 1 Kings, 4.25.

107 LONDON, ENGLAND, 2 JULY 1842

Your two letters dear Mary have remained unanswered a long time – but I have felt too sad and anxious even to write to you. Frances will tell you of all that I have gone through with – I have had a dreadful shock & though inured to sorrow & disappointments this has pressed very heavily upon me – coming too at such a time and we the only near ties separated by such a distance, but it has been ordained by infinite wisdom and I endeavor to be submissive under it – I feel as if I had lived twenty years in the last nine months Such changes! two such unexpected events succeeding each other.[1]

Frances has written to you respecting Margarets engagement & marrying and all the circumstances attending it – therefore I will not enter into particulars – sufficient to say that *I am satisfied* – she appears to be very much attached to Mr. Hodgson[2] and he has been devoted in his attentions to her – I trust that it will be productive of happiness and if she survives Sarah & myself she will not stand alone in the world.

I try to take the most favorable view of it though I find it difficult to look to the bright side of things in this world of care, anxiety, and sorrow – Fears with me preponderate Hopes. – Mr. H. is a well educated Man and a Gentleman in his habits, feelings & manners – His domestic character is yet to be proved – I have promised to let Frances know how that developes.

I do not allow myself to think of a separation from Frances – it is very trying, and I feel ready to go with her, but taking all things into view I do think it best to remain a year longer – I view Europe as only a School of improvement to the mind, and for that reason I force myself to see sights Westminster Abbey has interested me more than any thing that I have seen in London. I was disappointed in the Rhine – it is inferior to the Hudson, but Switzerland realized all my expectations, and Germany is a delightful land – I should like to pass a whole summer in & near Geneva – Lausanne is the sweetest spot I ever beheld. The Hotel that we stopped at was built upon

Gibbens domain, and we saw the Tree under which he studied.[3] Nothing on the Continent interested me so much as the ancient Cathedrals that of Aix la Chapelle was particularly interesting there we saw the mausoleum of Charlemagne the stone chair upon which he sat and on which so many Emperors were crowned. The Cathedral of Antwerp the extension of which Napoleon compared to mechlin lace contains Reubens celebrated descent from the Cross. I have seen so many Cathedrals, so many Galleries that I jumble them together. I now feel as if I should like to see a little of rural life in England – We expect to visit Scotland after we have seen Bath & several other places in England.

I shall return a better American than when I came here divest Europe of its antiquities, its Paintings, its Sculpture and its Music, and we have the advantage – The state of Religion in Italy is an objection to that Country – though it possesses great beauty of climate & scenery as Byron says "its very weeds are beautiful."[4]

I have sent you by Frances a box of flower seeds from the Alps a specimen of agate from the Alps in a paper knife and a book that you have long wished for Col. Hutchinsons Memoir. I regret that I could not procure it handsomely bound – I send it fresh from the press – it has just been republished in Pamphlet form. Love to your Mamma. Your affect. Mary

1. Here Mary Telfair is referring to the death of her niece, Margaret Long Telfair, on 5 February 1842 and the engagement and marriage of her sister Margaret to William Brown Hodgson.

2. Margaret Telfair's soon-to-be husband, William Brown Hodgson. For information on him, see Introduction, note 27.

3. Almost certainly a reference to Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788), who lived in Lausanne from 1783 until his death.

4. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto the Fourth, xxvi, line 6.

108 BATH, ENGLAND, 13 JULY 1842

I wrote you a brief and unsatisfying letter dear Mary by the last steamer and now feel that I ought to make some amends for my silence.

I have felt a reluctance to renewing my correspondence with my friends ever since the overwhelming shock of our bereavement reached us – It was

difficult to realize that one whom in the course of nature we thought would survive us, should so suddenly so unexpectedly have been torn from us & Life so full of Hopes and promises to her, who had not experienced the bitter sorrows and disappointments that have clustered around my path. She was the last and only Representative of a beloved Brother – the link that bound me to the world – Her character had sobered down and improved during the last two years, and I hoped to see her a useful and happy Woman contributing to the happiness of another who fully merited her love & respect – It was a mysterious providence that snatched her away at this interesting period, and laid low the hopes of many and made desolate her mother – I trust that this Providence dark and mysterious as it appears has not been lost upon me – that it has been a solemn admonition – and has alienated me more from this world – Nothing reconciles me to this afflictive event but the consciousness that she had put her trust in her Redeemer, and is now rejoicing with "the spirits of the just made perfect"[1] in the mansions of Glory released from the sorrow and sufferings of Earth – It is not incompatible to grieve for the loss of those we love and yet be submissive under the trial – We are so few in number and have seen one after one depart until I feel almost alone. The melancholy changes that have occurred since I left my Home, makes me feel broken up there – every letter conveys sad intelligence all these things remind us that this is not our rest, but I will not dwell too long upon that which chiefly occupies my thoughts.

I mentioned in my last letter that Margaret was engaged to Mr. Hodgson of Virginia on Monday at 1/2 past eight she was united to him at St. Georges Chapel and immediately after the ceremony was performed we separated from our friends Mr. Chrystie Frances & William – They took the Rail road for Liverpool we for Oxford. They sailed today in the Sheridan – a noble Ship – It is such a calm season that you may expect them to have a long voyage.

I cannot express to you how much I miss Frances – accustomed as I have been to long tete a tetes with her every day – I miss her as my *Confessor* – We passed two days in Oxford which is a beautiful and tranquil place. Its venerable Edifices, and ancient Elms give it an air of solemnity – I got up early in the morning and walked to Christs Chapel and took an amble through Addisons Walk which is the most secluded and beautiful spot it leads along the Isis on one side and a beautiful meadowland on the other.

We rode to Blenheim Castle the gift of Queen Anne to the great Duke of Marlborough. There we had a distant view of Fair Rosamunds Well – saw much that was curious in art, and beautiful in Nature.

All these things I view with a *Republican* eye and feel disposed to exclaim with Cowper "Riches have wings and grandeur is a dream." I would rather be Mary Few or Mary Telfair than the Duchess of Marlborough – there is something in the trammels of state most obnoxious to my *free* born spirit, and after all what are the enjoyments of this world at best – I have lived to find it an empty shew.

The summer climate of England is delightful and the cultivation of the Country superior to any thing that I have seen in Europe. Last Sunday morning Frances went with us to hear Baptist Noel.[2] I was delighted with him his voice is very musical – his countenance heavenly – he is natural and unaffected but there was not exhibited in his sermon that vigor of mind that I expected – We arrived in Bath this morning and this afternoon I went to see Mr. Jay[3] with my letter of introduction – The servant at the door of the sweet little manse with its flower garden in front took it up & returned to say he was at home and would be glad to see us – We sat an hour with him and I was charmed with his conversation, his countenance, & his manner – He talks in the most unstuddied style and you never forget for a moment his sacred calling – for he looks & talks like a Minister of the Gospel – I wish that I could remember his beautiful compliment to the Wesleyans – it was to the purpose that at a time when there was great deadness in among the Episcopalians & the Dissenters – The *Wesleyans* flew about like angels disseminating the truth. – He gives his weekly lecture tomorrow evening at 7 oclock and I certainly shall attend it – He told me only a few persons attended on Thursday Evenings – I could have sett for hours and heard him talk – In my next letter which will be to Frances I will tell her what I think of his preaching – Bath is the most beautiful Town that I have seen in England, so well built and its environs so picturesque. I would much rather live here than in London. I must say farewell. Your affect. Mary

1. Hebrews, 12.23.

2. Reverend Baptist Wriothesley Noel (1798–1873), an evangelical Anglican who left the church in 1848 to become a Baptist.

3. The Reverend William Jay.

109 PARIS, FRANCE, 25 SEPTEMBER [? 1842][1]

Your letter reached me a week since my dear Mary and we were truly happy to hear of Frances safe arrival – I wish that we were as safely landed on our native shore – We have decided upon sailing on the 22 of October in the great Western. I do not apprehend Sarahs decision to return home – sad as that home will be to me – Mrs. Telfairs situation and Catharine Bullochs reconciles me to it – I feel that I am not useful here, but may be so there – Catharine B has been so much to me in all my troubles and has done all that human sympathy could do that I think that I have now an opportunity of returning it – We shall not be more than three or four days in New York as the season will be too far advanced for Sarah to remain – her cough is troublesome though she does not complain and as the voyage before was of advantage I hope that it will be so again. Say to Mr. Chrystie that the *co-partnership* of *the Hawkes's and the Bayard's* has not been dissolved – Miss Bayard called forth all my sympathy she has too much sensibility *to push her way Entre nous* Mr. Hodgson tried at the legation to get male protection for her to England, but failed, and Mrs. Hawkes went with her & will return immediately to Paris if she can meet with an Escort if not I suppose that she will come alone. Miss Bayard dined with us twice – I tried to persuade her to go in the steamer with us but she seemed to think that a long voyage was necessary for her health – Miss Hawkes is to be a fellow passenger of ours – I do hope that Miss Bayard may find the wind tempered to the shorn lamb and meet with some friend upon whom she may lean – Genl. Mercer[2] is in London – my hopes rest upon him – in Liverpool she has a friend on whom she can depend – What would become of you or I similarly situated? My *energies* require the shelter of a roof I should feel like a sparrow on the house top – I believe that I should lose my faculties – poor dear Miss Bayard how I regret that I could not have aided her – it kept me awake (between you & I a whole night) but do not say any thing of it to any one but Frances. Miss H and herself explored Switzerland, and like the Chamois reached the highest mountain. They visited Baden and lingered on the Rhine met with a *titled* english pair, who shewed them great kindness – Mr. Birch passed last Sunday evening with us – we went in the afternoon to hear him preach he is suffering with Bronchitis – He seems to be deeply pious – I met at his house the other morning a very interesting Clergyman, *a Dissenter of course* his whole conversation bore upon the subject of religion – poor Man he was

so hoarse that it seemed an effort for him to speak he seems far advanced in consumption – Mrs. Birch is in every respect a suitable wife for him and though her whole family are high church is an excellent Presbyterian – I am more and more struck with the formality of the Church of England, and shall return a better Presbyterian, and a better Republican than I left it. The liveried footmen bearing the prayer books is ridiculous, and yet I have heard several most spiritual Preachers in the Episcopal church – they are like Angels visits few & far between – Mr. Birch thinks that there is no field for him here and returns to England in November. – I wish that we could get him to our free land – He mentioned that a congregation in England threatened to displace a Clergyman for preaching against public amusement – He thinks that the Dissenters are persecuted for their zeal. I am rejoiced that we have no established church and that all are permitted to worship God in their own form – The Scotch are good Whigs and ever as good Presbyterians – They have too much good sense to go at lengths with the administration. It is impossible for me to tell you the effect that the Scenery of Ayrshire had upon me – Eden must have been like it – Of all the classic spots in the "land of the mountain & the flood"[3] it is *first in my affection* – and presents itself to my minds eye like a painting – Ireland poor Ireland I can compare to a neglected *step* child – its emerald green, its pure air, and merry peasantry I shall always remember – it will literally be "a *green* spot in memorys waste."[4] Sadness is associated in my mind with every thing on this Earth – fleeting & perishing are inscribed upon all things here, and if I enjoy myself for a moment – I feel the next inclined to exclaim how unsatisfying – There is nothing true but Heaven[5] – Dear Mary when we meet I will tell you much that I cannot write. I long to see you *all* and will not be landed many moments before I see you – Sarah & Margaret desire love – the latter says that yours is the only heart felt congratulation that she has received. I agree with you in thinking & hoping that Mr. H may yet experience the advantage of having a pious Mother – Her instructions & her prayers may in due season meet with their reward. He is very domestic and has not been to a place of amusement since we came to Paris – There is much in him to like and I hope that he will give up diplomacy, and become a useful private character – I hate the *management* requisite for a Diplomatist – but to use the vulgar phrase all trades must prosper – Truly yours MT

1. This date is supported by Mary Telfair's known itinerary.

2. Charles Fenton Mercer (1778–1858), a Virginia-born politician and soldier. During the 1840s he became best known for his attempts to establish Anglo-American settlements in Texas.

3. Scott, *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, line 20.

4. This phrase may have been taken from lines 11–12 of Thomas Moore's poem "Oh The Days Are Gone When Beauty Bright," which read, "No that hallowed form is ne'er forgot which first love traced, Still lingering haunts the greenest spot on memory's waste."

5. The opening line of Thomas Moore's poem "This World is all a fleeting show," *Sacred Songs*, (London, 1816).

110 LONDON, ENGLAND, 18 OCTOBER 1842

I received Frances' interesting letter in Paris which was a momentary substitute for her society and for which you must thank her – Yours dear Mary was handed to me the day after my return to London to comfort me in this great and to me lonely City, for I have not a friend in it.

We sojourned three weeks in Paris – I felt as if the besom of destruction had passed over it – I could not avoid contrasting my first & last visit – What changes have passed over us all since that period – What links have been broken! – Perhaps it is good for me to be so much under the influence of association – my eager temperament requires its salutary checks.

You must not be jealous of Europe, – though it is full of interesting objects and associations, it is not *Home*. – I feel towards it as I do to a new and delightful acquaintance who refreshes my intellect with the *outpourings* of new and brilliant ideas – but to America I have the feelings of an old & cherished friend – I love it with all its faults – As I have a natural antipathy to long stories I will answer your question "What acquaintances have you made?" in as graphic a manner as possible – and you will conclude that if not *Angelic* ones they have been like angels visits few and far between – Mr. Jay in Bath an hour with him delightfully spent – Dr. Chalmers in Belfast – a green spot in memorys waste – Dr. Wild[1] in Dublin, an author of some repute and an eminent surgeon – Colo. Wilson[2] in Paris, British Minister to Lima – a frank social Englishman – he quite won my heart by bringing into our room under his arm a flat band box to shew us an elegant gift he had just purchased for his wife – Most men of his rank would have had a *liveried footman* at his heels, to carry the burden – My measure of

greatness is an exemption from *littlenesses*. The trammels of State are to me what a harness is to a wild horse. We were one day in Havre made the acquaintance of a most agreeable Irish Baronet, who called early the next morning to see us being on the wing for Paris.

Saw Mr. Beasley[3] and liked him very much – he bears the impress of two valuable *commodities* Truth & Honesty he paid us a very long visit talked much of Mr. Gallatin and of Washington Irving who he seems much attached to – He called him *Wash* – how unpoetical!

I contracted such a wretched cough in Paris that I could not enjoy the Seine and had to keep below but have arrived at this conclusion that Scotland is the most interesting country that I have visited and yet I felt so very sad while there – like one who had a previous existence – or an Exile returned from his wanderings and found all that he had known passed away – Wales is exquisitely beautiful, and resembles Switzerland London as a city is superior to Paris – its noble Parks which Edmund Burke happily styled the lungs of the Metropolis, are perfect pictures of rural beauty[4] – I am no friend to *Brutes* life, and yet I almost envied the cows luxuriating in such green pastures by the side of still waters.

We visited Penzhurst on our way to Dover – saw there Wallers Walk & Sacharessa's portrait[5] – It is embalmed in History as the birth Place of Sir Philip Sidney – Miss Bayard & Miss Hawkes sailed on the 25th from Liverpool in a Packet for New York – Mrs. Carroll and her daughter were fellow Passengers – Miss Bayard is the most perfect union of *dependence* & *independence*. I hope that she will soon be embosomed in her family after all her tossings to & fro – She is very interesting and made good use of her time in Europe. Tell Frances that I longed for her yesterday at Camberwell Chapel where for the third time I went to hear Melville[6] and was gratified at last – He is superior to what I expected for he is not only eloquent, but ardent, simple & natural – His text was Pauls Epistle to the Ephesians 6 chap. 19v – He dwelt upon the efficacy of prayer – the necessity of a congregation praying for their Pastor as well as his praying for them – for the missionaries too – He said that prayer moved the arm of him who moved the Universe and that Moses's arm fell powerless from the want of the supplications of his people. I will tell you more about him when we meet which I trust if it is the will of Providence will be on the 7th of November – I long to see you all my dear Mary. We shall apply at the Carleton House being

nearer to you than the other. How I wish to be with you as much as possible the few days that we remain in New York. It is 9 oclock in the morning and so dark that candles are necessary – a real London fog.

I wonder that the Southern people who go every year to kill time at Saratoga do not come to Europe to improve their minds.

Mr. Hodgson is very English in his tastes & habits. He thinks me I believe a perfect *outlaw* from the Court of Fashion – a very *plebian* in my notions – tell Frances I have to *war* against three now instead of two – but my stand is decided – I must {*illegible*} the Republican and yet no one admires true elegance more than I do, but true elegance consists in simplicity and freedom from ostentation & parade. America is only behind Europe in the fine arts and in *quiet* – Every body is in a hurry with us, no one uses *immoderate* dispatch in this land of order and system.

It is pleasant to see the Sabbath so strictly observed as it is here & in Scotland – it is more desecrated in Paris than in Italy – all trades flourish on that day, and the shops are all kept open. I feel as if I was in a Christian land. I dare say that Europe is full of interesting people but they are so judged in that few can know them. Farewell dear Mary – our love – Mr. Hodgson desires his respects. Your affect. Mary

1. Possibly William Robert Wills Wild (1815–1876), later the father of Oscar Wilde, and an ear and eye surgeon. He wrote on various topics, mainly concerned with Ireland, but before 1842 was best known for *The Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira, Teneriffe, and Along the Shores of the Mediterranean* (Dublin, 1840).

2. Belford Hinton Wilson (1804–1858), a diplomat who served as the British consul general in Lima, Peru (1832–1837), and as chargé d'affaires and consul general (1837–1841). Between 1842 and 1852 he acted as the British consul general in Venezuela.

3. Possibly Frederick Beasley (177?–1845), an Episcopal clergyman and author, who was professor of Moral and Mental Philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania (1813–1828).

4. This was a fairly common phrase, and it is unclear where and when Mary Telfair first encountered it.

5. A reference to the politician and poet Edward Waller (1605/6–1687) and Lady Dorothy Sidney, the subject of several of his poems. The portrait of Sacharissa had been painted by Marcus Gheeraerts.

6. All that can be ascertained about Melville is that he was a Methodist preacher, possibly with connections to the Isle of Man.

III PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, 27 OCTOBER [NOVEMBER][1] [1842]

I can scarcely realise it my dear Mary that only six days have elapsed since I left New York but so it is – My time has been spent in my own chamber and daily visits to my Cousins and poor Mrs. Jones, who bears up with christian fortitude and resignation under the weight of her heavy affliction, but poor George has not the same support – his grief is overwhelming. His sister was his only companion, and he loved her with all the ardour that a young, innocent and affectionate heart, is capable of. I confess that the sorrows of the young, though very touching, affect me less than those of the old. They have life before them and can form new ties – they rise from the pressure of grief, as the grass from that of the footsteps of Man. – Mr. Hodgson and Margaret left us this morning at 6 o clock for Virginia. Margaret felt leaving us more than I thought she would, we expect this day week to leave here to meet them in Richmond. I have not heard from Savannah since my arrival here which is a disappointment as I fully expected a letter from C Bulloch. Martha I hope has arrived by this time and will I hope be happy in her new situation. A boarding school education is not a good preparation for the profound retirement in which she will be placed, and yet any situation is preferable to the vortex of gaiety into which young persons are usually plunged when they enter upon life. How many souls and bodies are shipwrecked by it!

When will Miss Bayard be in Philadelphia on her way to Harrisburgh? not I fear until we shall have left it – Tell her that I shall often think of the *sentimental* conversation we had during our walk to Prince Street – I left my *Ruins* on Morisons counter, and had to jump out of the omnibus and *trudge* back for it. It was candle light by the time I got to Mrs. Plummers.

I had a long delightful chat with Mrs. Whitney – say to Miss Bayard that we left her *platonic* friend behind, and I hope that she has enjoyed his eloquence as much as he did her conversation the evening she passed with us. – Margaret went into a shop with Miss Bell, who introduced her to Mrs. Richd. Bayard with whose appearance she was delighted. She described her to me as classically beautiful, and too youthful looking to be the mother of daughters grown up.

Mr. Bethune called last evening to see us I was with my Cousins – Sarah entertained him. I miss every body who calls, for my only object in being here is to see my Cousins. They are now living in the attic – their

parlour not being in order. Their Land lady has just moved into Portico Square – they are nearer to Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Drayton than you are to Anne Wilkes, and I hope that they may exchange visits often with the latter – Philadelphia is not to be compared to New York in any respect – it looks like an English provincial town. *Triste* seems to be the motto upon every door.

Sarah and myself leave positively on Wednesday next, *unescorted*, for Wm. Drayton[2] is too sick to accompany us. He looks wretchedly – We have a very decent Scotch man who is going out with us in the capacity of Coach Man and Gardner – He will take charge of the baggage and I of Sarah and *Coomba* – it is the first time that we have moved without a *gentle* man. I received a letter from Catharine Bulloch yesterday dated the 20th of October – she mentioned that Mr. McAllister was extremely ill, at his summer residence, 30 miles from Savannah two Physicians had been sent for – Do if it is not giving you too much trouble will you call at Mrs. Frances's and enquire how he is, and if you write early on Monday I shall receive your letter before I leave here – If you get your letter in the office on Monday morning I shall receive it on Tuesday – direct it to Miss *Mary* Telfair No 5 Portico Square Spruce St Philadelphia

Love to your Mamma & Fr I wrote to the latter as she requested the day after my arrival here – affectionately yours M Telfair

1. Mary Telfair mistakenly dated this October. Her itinerary indicates that this must have been written in November 1842.

2. William Drayton (1776–1846), a South Carolinian lawyer and politician.

112 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 12 DECEMBER [1842][1]

I will make no apology dear Mary for not writing to you sooner, for you know how very sad have been my feelings in returning to a dreary House after a long absence – No cheerful voice to welcome us, but our Servants, who seemed quite overcome by the sight of us – They said it seemed to them as if we had all passed away – they could not bear to look at the house. I never knew before how much they valued us – They greeted Mr. Hodgson with great cordiality, and were glad to see him look *so old*, for Gossip had spread its wings very wide in this direction, and some pronounced him to be 22 while others stopped at 35 – There is a great deal of ill nature in the world and there are two events in life which seem to

draw poor human nature from its secret cell, and cause every one to *publish* what they know or can imagine of the Individuals who marry or die – There is comfort in living in a large City where no one knows you – one of the *attractions* of Europe is, we can live *unknowing* and *unknown*. We were highly favored on our journey – a bright Sun shone upon our pathway by day, and a refulgent moon shed its silver beams by night – scarcely a breeze ruffled the waves and we reached home the fifth day remaining a day & night in Charleston. Mrs. Wilson[2] we found a most interesting companion – she is very natural and full of originality and is perfectly devoted to the cause in which she has embarked – she reminded me very often of Miss Bayard, only that Miss B delights in society and Mrs. Wilson seems indifferent to it, and yet she is very social and playful at times – narrates extremely well – she has gone to Carolina to visit Mr. Wilsons friends – she promised to come & pass a day with us when she returns and to tell me about life in Africa – She knows Governor McLean the Husband of L very well – she thinks that her death was accidental. Mrs. Wilson is a woman that I could become very much attached to and her influence must be a happy one wherever she goes. – Poor Mrs. Telfair arrived a few days since she looks very miserable – it seemed a comfort to her to unburden her sorrows, and they have been heavy indeed – Her House is desolate – and she is bowed down with grief and ill health she says that her heart must have been very hard to have required such chastisement. Berta is installed as my pupil for the winter – she took her first lessons yesterday and seemed interested in them, she is to come and see me every morning from 9 to 1 0 clock I wish to interest her in History, sacred & profane so as to lead her mind from fiction entirely – after her lessons in Geography I shewed her Engravings of the places she read of and traced on the Map – she listened with a great deal of pleasure to my descriptions of Rome and I would not desire better material to work upon – Her affections want cultivation as well as her intellect but nature has done a good deal for her I have enlisted Mr. Hodgsons aid to teach her French, but I am afraid his patience will fail for he has never taught the young idea how to shoot – I think that the Bible ought to be the basis of Education and it may be made very interesting to a child.

I have been twice to see Catharine Bulloch – She was dreadfully affected at our first meeting – the second visit to her was more cheering – she talked over her trials more calmly – Hers has been a refining process and she has

been taught by the best school master affliction to look above this vale of tears for comfort. – She talked much of you and the consolation you afforded in your letters – It is a great gift to know how to impart comfort to others – How I miss her – I cannot bear to look upon her former home – Sarah Cecil says that the last night she spent under that roof was agonising – she drew her bed to the spot where her mother died and said that she must sleep there for it was the last time that she would look upon it – I feel as if I had lived twenty years in the last eventful year – I feel as if I was living among the departed for I am so little interested in what is passing – I have been only down our steps to Church & to see C. Bulloch – and for the rest of my life I desire no society but that of my friends. Mr. Hodgson finds our quiet & retired life a great contrast to New York with which he was delighted as well as with our friends and acquaintances – He accommodated himself wonderfully though at first seeing us so depressed he seemed to feel lost, but he has been favorably received and I think that he is very grateful for attention when he goes out he says that he is very glad to get home to us – I {*illegible*} hope the feeling will continue – Margaret desires me to thank Matilda for her letter which she will soon answer and I thank you dear Mary for your very welcome one which I will answer soon – Love to your Mamma & Frances kind remembrance to Mr. Chrystie & William. I hope that the health of the former continues to improve – Have you heard of Miss Hawkes? I cannot but feel for her lonely situation I perceive by the papers that Judge Carleton has gone back to Europe – I fear the organ of paternal love is not strongly developed in his brain – How strange to wander off from an only child – Do write soon & often Truly your friend MT

1. The date of this letter is indicated by the reference to William Brown Hodgson's first visit to Savannah since his marriage. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 269.

2. Mrs. Wilson was the wife of John Leighton Wilson (1809–1886), a South Carolinian theologian and Presbyterian missionary. Between 1834 and 1853 the couple worked as missionaries in western Africa.

113 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 26 JANUARY 1843

If I believed in spells my dear Mary I should think that an Enchanters had been thrown over your pen, or that you have been *classic*

enough to drink deeply of the Waters of Lethe. I know that you are occupied usefully and consequently have not as much time at your disposal as "busy Idlers" have.[1] I had written the above lines before your letter arrived yesterday, so I must revoke the first sentence, and proceed to chat with you about *little* things, for no *great* ones diversify "the noiseless tenor of my way."[2]

Catharine Bulloch is again called upon to bear up under a new trial. Mr. Bulloch left her to seek employment in the west – He got as far as Philadelphia on his way to Michigan and has been discouraged from proceeding any further. There he ought not to remain. If I were in her situation, I would rather be where I was unknown and pursue the humblest occupation than live here with suspicion resting upon him.

One false step in life brings such a train of evils upon those who depart from the path of integrity. How true is the hackneyed proverb that "Honesty is the best policy." The love of shew, and the spirit of {*illegible*} is the ruin of Character as well as of fortunes in this Country. To *appear* rich is the acme of ambition with the majority of persons in America. The national character has been deeply injured by it. In this place the most luxurious livers are those who live upon their *wits*. The facility with which money could be borrowed from Banks and can still by Individuals possessing scarcely the means of procuring a daily support has had a most corrupting influence. Indorsors have been ruined and we *harmless* stockholders made to pay for it all. There are times for Moral Epidemics as well as physical. The Cholera seems to have been the forerunner of the stealing *mania* so diffused throughout our land. William Drayton was talking to me a few evenings since on that subject. He says the same immorality prevailed in Great Britain during the reign of George the first. I suppose human nature is depraved every where but our laws for the punishment of crimes are not enforced – I believe that the fear of punishment *in this world* prevents many, who have no fear of God, from committing crimes.

Mr. & Mrs. Echart the Missionaries from Ceylon passed an evening with us last week. He fell to my lot, while Sarah & Margaret had the benefit of her "cheek music." I was very much pleased with him, his conversation is very instructive and he can talk for hours without being fatigued. He strikes me as being a most enlightened and liberal Christian. He is anxious to go as a Missionary to our Indians – his delight is to instruct the Heathen.

I heard him preach three times during his stay in town. I believe that she is on a visit to Eliza Clay. She is very like her sister Mrs. Wilson, but not quite so pleasing. She told me that she left Mrs. & Miss Bayard in Philadelphia *unsettled*. She thinks that Cousin Caroline enjoys the excitement of moving to & fro. When you see Miss Bayard inform her that her *ancient* friend General Mercer has gone to Texas. How melancholy for a man of his age to be *Homeless*. A man of his sensibility ought like Cowper to have had a Mrs. Unwin to take care of him, and to sympathise with him. He is the only modest Virginian that I have ever known. An association of ideas brings another of the Sons of the ancient Dominion to my mind "*our vagrant Judge*." What a singular history is his. I wonder how he could tear himself away from *"the fascination of a high born smile"*[3] *"the pomp and circumstance"* of Glorious England. I predict, for I am *a true Prophetess,* a *Stillingness*, that his biography will wind up with a union with some *rich* New Orleans *Dowager* whose splendid dowry will be a full compensation for the loss of that 200,000 "*out* of a *small Capital*." You & I ought to be *ashamed* of our *moderate* notions when we come in contact with such *Capitalists*. I have always *doubted* his claims to *Nabobism*. Frances must have inoculated me with her horror of *pretension*. Once I could laugh at it, but now I am less amiable, for it irritates me, and [at] the same time makes me more anxious to pass for less than I am in every way. When the world appears to us *unveiled*, what is there *in* it worth struggling for. We heard of poor little Berta's safe arrival at Montpellier she wrote a *concise* letter to her Grand mother informing her of her safe arrival. She returned better satisfied than I expected. I do not like her rising at this season of the year at 1/2 past four, but if her health does not suffer from it – it is all very well. She is very delicate still, though so much strengthened by a change of climate and of habit. The Bishop was delighted with her. He thinks that there is much intellect in her and more feeling than she is willing to shew. He says that her eyes are like nothing that he has ever seen and that they remind him of the descriptions of those of the Enchantresses of Eastern tales. No one thinks her pretty, and every one says what a remarkable face – she is a child that ought to be *studied* to be properly managed. Her prejudices are as strong as those of *a Man* and more decided than most that I know. A religious education (if the seeds that are now planted take root) may eradicate faults that a fashionable one would nourish.

I heard yesterday of the death of Tom Clay's betrothed of other days. Mrs. Harford who married a very young man 18 months ago and died in giving birth to her first born. She was much beloved {*illegible*} I have more to say if my paper admitted of it. Your affect. friend Mary.

1. This quotation appears to have come from either Robert Montgomery, *Peter Pilgrim, or, A Ramblers Recollections* (1838), 1.15, or William Ware, *Probus, or, Rome in the Third Century. In Letters of Lucius M. Piso, from Rome, to Fausta, the Daughter of Gracchus, at Plamyra* (1838), II: Letter IX.

2. Gray, "Elegy in a Country Church Yard," stanza 19.

3. This phrase is found in Young's poem *The Complaint or Night Thoughts*, Night 2: "On Time, Death and Friendship."

114 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 10 FEBRUARY 1843

We have been wondering dear Mary at the silence of each other. I broke the spell by writing to you by Mr. Hodgson who left us for Washington on the 6th and was to put your letter in the office there. I regret that he thought it necessary to tread upon *diplomatic* ground. From Mrs. Berriens account of it, the most thorough heartlessness must prevail there – all the vices of a Court without its *external* refinement. We have had two *court bred* Ladies here this winter Mrs. & Miss Cass[1] – they are old and intimate acquaintances of Mr. Hodgsons, Margaret went with him to see them and they have been frequently to see us. – Mrs. Cass is a religious, intelligent woman and I can imagine that Parisian life accorded but little with her taste – her daughter is a complete Fashionist and I only wonder how she can live in an atmosphere like Savannah –

The changes made by Death in some families – the pecuniary distresses of many, makes it in every respect an uncongenial residence for the gay & fashionable. The climate has benefitted the health of Mrs. C. who is very delicate. Henry Ledyard has been extremely ill in Paris – his Wife is very anxious to return and be with her mother but they cannot leave before next Autumn – this intelligence may interest Frances more than you. – I rode out the day after I last wrote to you to see Catharine Bulloch – she seemed almost cheerful before I left her – I wish that she had one or two neighbors to associate with – The Methodist Clergyman who had a Church about half a mile from her Cottage visits her very often and she says that she

has derived great comfort from his conversation – she says that he is truly devout, and full of christian sympathy – It was a singular coincidence, her *dream* and your *warning*.

I do not think that I am in any danger of being drawn to "*the Church*" the simplicity of my own suits me best, habit too is very powerful and it is natural to prefer that which we have been accustomed to from Childhood. – My visit to Scotland has inspired me with a wish to become better acquainted with John Knox whose life lately published by McRie[2] I have just commenced, and I find that he is disposed to be more indulgent to the stern Reformer than other of his Biographers. – How completely we identify characters with places! Calvin with Switzerland, Luther with Germany, and Knox with "Caledonia stern and wild."[3]

Songs bring certain people before us – and flowers too.

I shall never look at a beautiful sunsett in a pleasant land of hill and dale, without thinking of the last rays of a glorious sun resting upon the ruins of "Alloways auld haunted Kirk" and the Brigg of bonnie Doon – the most romantic of all classic streams.[4] I am ashamed to say that my mind often reverts to those scenes, when the *local talk* is going on and when I ought to be listening to "He said, so, and she said, and they said." Depend upon it that a great City where you are *unknown* is preferable in many respects to a small town or village – When in New York I thought that there was but little difference between Europe and America, but here I am forced to admit that the contrast is great indeed – I never felt so much the want of congenial society as I have done this winter, and I have never felt before the same indifference to surrounding objects.

We have given up all idea of purchasing or renting a house in New York – Mr. Hodgsons ideas are too *grand* for me – He likes *double* houses while my standard is such an one as yours – a *single* three story house – I look upon a fine spacious Establishment as {*illegible*} for Care, and of all cares, Housekeeping cares are the most uninteresting. What we shall eat, and what we shall drink seem uppermost to the mind.

If persons could command the same aid from well trained Servants, as in England, and had the same revenues then they might inhabit fine Mansions without having their minds enslaved.

I am every day more and more convinced that simplicity carried throughout in living, in character, habits & manners is conducive to virtue – What

disgrace has an overweening attachment to shew brought upon our Country – To live above ones means is synonimous with want of principle. – In consequence of the misconduct of Bank officers, and the immense draughts made by different Individuals upon our Banks – they give no Dividends. – Mr. Wm. Bulloch is totally ruined. He was in debt to one Bank 70,000 dollars and his whole property has been sold for 30,000 – His family bear up with great magnanimity under the trials but he is broken down by it – The last has been a most eventful year in this community. *Change* is inscribed upon every thing in it. Gordan Howard[5] is married and gone with his bride to Alabama to live – His mother came down to his Wedding. Mrs. Matthair is less changed than any one – she retains her interest in matters & things. Our love to all very truly yours MT

1. Probably the wife and daughter of Lewis Cass (1782–1866). Born in New Hampshire, Cass served as a brigadier general in the U.S. Army during the War of 1812. Between 1813 and 1831 he acted as governor of the Michigan Territory. He was secretary of war 1831–1836. He then became American minister to France and served in that capacity for the next six years. Cass was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1845, resigning in 1848 after being nominated as the Democratic Party presidential candidate. Following his defeat by Zachary Taylor, Cass returned to the Senate from 1849 to 1857, when he was appointed secretary of state by President James Buchanan. He resigned in 1860 because of Buchanan's vacillation over the secession crisis.

2. Thomas M'Crie, the elder, *The Life of John Knox* (Edinburgh, 1812), and *Additions to the second and third editions of the Life of John Knox* (Edinburgh, 1818).

3. Scott, *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 6.2.1.

4. This appears to be a reference to Francis Grose's drawing of Alloway Kirk in his two-volume work *The Antiquities of Scotland*, first published in 1789. The "Brigg of bonnie Doon" is from Robert Burns's poem "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon."

5. John Gordon Howard married Margaret Herb Reed on 31 December 1842 in Savannah's Episcopalian Church.

115 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 22 DECEMBER [? 1843][1]

Your long expected and despaired of letter my dear Mary shed its lustre on our trio three evenings since, and I can truly sympathise with you in the chimney corner for I never leave mine except to take a walk *from duty* – We like crickets live in it but no "sympathetic mirth, no kitten its

tricks to try" but "the crackling faggot flies" for we pile the wood up in opposition to modern Anthracite[2] – Sarah insisted upon my reading aloud Master Humphreys Clock *preceding* it with a compliment by saying she could never listen to any ones reading but mine – it is a family vice not to listen to reading[3] – I never heard but two persons in the whole course of my life that I could listen to – Mrs. Wayne is called a fine reader but I cannot listen to her – her voice is modulated by art – but to return to Master Humphrey it was a curious association but my mind will run riot I could not avoid thinking of you & I, when Master Humphrey and the deaf man got together – There is a vein of pathos throughout which is quite *overpowering* – My unfortunate propensity to cry and laugh make a work combining the ludicrous with the pathetic too exciting – It even carried me back to my childish days at Greenwich where the old clock stood in the corner near the chimney – Sarah Haig who never could sympathise in my *ideal* sorrows hearing me snuffle calls out "How do you do Mr. Cheves" – my sorrow was exchanged for laughter – I believe I told you of the confessions of *two* elderly Gentlemen one read a novel every day – the other read and *wept* over them incessantly which drew forth Sarahs salutation – Does it not prove the truth of the old adage – "there is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous." – I have been to a wedding since I wrote to you, George Kollock & Susan Johnsons – You will admire my independence when I tell you (it being a cold night) I went in my *buttoned* morning Dress and Indian rubber over shoes so much for *living* in Omnibuses – and here was Aunt Martha that great *luminary of Weddings* in her *best Lyons silk* and cap full of flowers – a change always comes o'er the spirit of my dream when I return to my home – my fine pleated collars sported in 9th Street are shut up in my drawer, and it is an effort to put on a pair of new shoes – I feel as if "nothing could a charm impart" but fresh air and flowers.[4] – I cannot write a letter unless it is drawn forth by the no less powerful stimulant of a letter You have heard of the death of Mrs. Savage I suppose from Anne Wallace – her end was as tranquil as her life[5] – Mrs. Jones arrived here a few days since I have not seen her yet.

What has become of the Judge? did he return to *the charge* or was his European trip *a failure* – as 150,000 dollars is only a portion of a *small* capital he ought to *flourish* in the old world amid Paintings, Statues and Italian Opera's – perhaps he waits for the constellations of beauty & wit *headed*

by Venus – I think that he will be a bad example to *little Cupid*. Poor Miss Bayard – how could she go without a relative and toss upon the rude waves at this tempestuous season – I have often sighed for an enterprising spirit but perhaps I possessed it – the fruits of it would be disappointment – And when I feel "unfriended, melancholy, slow" if I could only realize that it may be a shield from the many woes that an enterprising spirit leads to I might say *it is well.*[6] – What sort of a Man is her *Conductor* "a nice man" I trust, for a *dirty* one would be sadly in the way. – I am surprised that the Mentor of her youth displayed no *"chivalrous devotion"* in her cause – *"old Bachelors are shy"* I have heard his history lately which is a very peculiar, and a very interesting one – I now excuse his abstraction of mind which I attributed to a want of interest in those around him – Sorrow and disappointment must have encompassed his path – I was puzzled to find out who he reminded me of and not until the morning we left, did I discover his resemblance to Judge Nicholson *not in person* but manners and conversation it struck me most forcibly. – One of the pleasures of my life is to find resemblances – there are some people that break the mould when formed – Do you know that you are one of them – I cannot find your resemblance – Your Mammas beautiful letter affected us like Master Humphrey's clock Sarah has made several efforts to answer it – I shewed it to Catharine Bulloch – she said that she never read any thing except Washingtons farewell address that touched her heart more – Do not tell her this – it might seem like flattery and you know that I am unversed in that art – I am sorry I did not commence my lines nearer for I have so much to say – Judge Wayne broke in on the monotony of an evening lately – He got upon politics a violent follower of Vanbeuren – I told him my politics embraced but two subjects having very limited ideas – I was for that Administration that would terminate the Florida War, and give us a National Bank – I am afraid that he thinks my head runs upon lucre – He says that a National Bank would ruin the South – make it more tributary to the North – You see I am willing to be under northern government – The Judge & I seldom agree but though he is the Antipodes to my great Men I like him for auld lang syne there is a free masonry in the magic of those words even when there is no congeniality of feeling to gild them – but if all men had *hearts* we should love them as well as we do our female friends but they are so seared by worldly intercourse – answer this soon or I cannot write – Yours Mary

1. The date of this letter is indicated by the reference to the death of Mrs. Savage.

2. From the eighth chapter of Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (London, 1766). It is unclear in which edition Mary Telfair first encountered them.

3. Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock* (London, 1840).

4. This comes from Oliver Goldsmith's poem "The Hermit." It is unclear in which edition she came across it.

5. Eliza Savage died in May 1843 at the age of seventy-five. *Register of Deaths in Savannah*, 5:190.

6. This phrase is from Oliver Goldsmith's poem "The Traveller." It is unclear in which edition Mary Telfair encountered it.

116 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 9 JANUARY 1844

I have played Mrs. Mitten of Novel memory, my dear Mary and commenced the New Year by putting Mrs. Frances's *energies* in requisition.[1] I have *glided* into a box (that Mrs. McAllister has sent her) – a small jar of Ogechee limes which were sent to Catharine Bulloch, which she sent to me to send to Mary Few – I had a new years present from a friend of a Jar of figs, which I have sent to you. Your Mamma will enjoy them for they are soft and suit us whose "grinders are a few."[2]

I enclose in this letter a mark which Berta made for your Mamma. She consulted me about a motto – I recommended "an old Disciple" she said that she would rather choose something *out of her own head*, which was appropriate – so I recommended her to do so. She returned to Montpellier[3] on friday without reluctance she was a few days later than the rest of the Girls which she was much afraid would cause her to be behind the others in her class.

I wrote to Frances several days since consequently am *exhausted*. Stilling[4] has been by constant companion for several days past and has rivalled *Charles Lamb* in my *affections*. You must read his life – it is more like a romance than a real life. I never identified myself more with the sufferings of any one that I could not call friend or acquaintance. He is so natural with all his visionary plans and enjoyments – There are some thrilling scenes described in his Memoir which makes one almost breathless. I am a little *germanic* in my taste. I cannot like Characters cut out like fashionable garments after one pattern. Stilling was *an Original*, and he went through a refining process to fit him for two worlds – His reliance upon Providence under every trial, and his undeviating integrity under temptation is beauti-

fully portrayed. He was singularly fortunate in his choice of Wives; he was *thrice* blessed.

What have you been reading this winter? I have exercised my needle more than I have done for years past, and like the Snail always at Home.

I am glad to see any one who *drops* in unexpectedly, but the very idea of *inviting* any one, makes me *nervous*. Aunt Montgomery would say that I had not *a bit of hospitality* in me, and would propose *yoking* me to Frances.

When I hear from you I will write a long letter. Affectionately yours, Mary

Margaret sends you two newspapers from Edinburgh giving an account of the Scotch *reformation* – alias secession – I perceive that Dr. Chalmers has been preaching in the open air at Aberdeen – how I should like to have heard him. I send you some Poppinack seed – plant them in a pot in March the flower is of an exquisite fragrance, and will be a treasure in your conservatory. It grows in the open air with us.

1. This may be a reference to the "Mrs. Mitten" mentioned in chapter 5 of Maria Edgeworth's novel *Belinda* (London, 1801).

2. Ecclesiastes, 12.3. This is a slight misquotation of "and the grinders cease because they are few."

3. Bishop Stephen Elliott founded Montpellier Female Institute, near Macon, Monroe County, Georgia, in 1842.

4. Johann Heinrich Stilling, *The Autobiography of Heinrich Stilling* (London, 1843).

117 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 18 APRIL 1844

I wrote to Frances my dear Mary by the Bolton and sent only a few lines to you in a little note since then, I have received your letter and am concerned to learn from it that you have been confined to your bed for four days with a bilious attack. I trust that you are quite well again. I always feel anxious when a length of time transpires without hearing from you Health and Life are so uncertain, that we cannot always look to the bright side of things when separated from Friends, This truth has been most painfully confirmed a week since.

We were entirely unprepared for the sad intelligence of the death of my Cousin Eliza while we were anticipating that of Cousin Margaret whose health has been declining all winter.

A letter from Mrs. Dr. Jones to Sarah Cecil requesting her to break it to

us, was the first intimation of her illness, the same letter announced that she was no more. Her bereaved Sister had not been informed of the solemn event perhaps too ill to allow her friends to communicate it to her. We are all anxiety to hear how she sustained the shock. It seems in her feeble state of body almost too much for her to support. They were so united in life, so dependant upon each other for comfort and happiness, that in this case "*the Survivor dies.*"

I feel that a strong tie has been severed and when I look back upon the period of childhood when I first learned to love her, it seems that my attachment "grew with my growth." I have corresponded with her ever since I was fourteen years of age. My esteem for her Character was very great – She had striking virtues – a strict regard to truth the most prominent. I never knew her guilty of a subterfuge, and even when the World had many attractions for her she seemed to rise above the petty feelings that govern so many of its votaries. Mary Ritchie told me last autumn that my Cousins mind she thought, was much exercised on religious subjects, that she read her Bible a great deal.

She was a very reserved Person, and seldom expressed her feelings – never talked of herself with all this, she possessed the deepest sensibility and though she made no outward profession I trust that her heart was given to God, and she depended upon Saviours righteousness for Salvation.

I have been very much interested in a Funeral Address of Bishop Hobarts[1] on the State of the departed – Your Mamma recommended it to me about three years ago. I read it at the time and thought his remarks upon an intermediate state (that is Paradise) very natural. It is a doctrine supported by some of the most eminent Divines not only in the Episcopal but in the Presbyterian Church that the souls of the departed who die in the faith remain in Paradise until the resurrection, then when united with their glorified Bodies they enter into perfect bliss in Heaven. I should like you to read the address and know how it strikes you. – Now our thoughts convey us into the invisible world, when those we love are removed from this transient, unsatisfying world. We try to trace them in their heavenward course, and strive to look within the veil, and imagine them holding sweet intercourse with those with whom they walked on Earth. I received a note from Catharine Bulloch last evening expressing her sympathy for our loss. She was very fond of my Cousin, and took great delight in her society. All

who knew her intimately valued her highly – I have never been able to converse with CB relative to the subject of her Husbands disgrace – she alludes to it, I am dumb. Do you now sometimes feel a degree of shame for people, who do wrong as if you yourself had committed the act.

I am unfortunate in this respect and wish that I could overcome it, and learn more to blush for myself and not to be thinking so much of the feelings of others – Since writing the above I have received a letter from Mrs. Jones giving me the particulars of my Cousins death she expired without a struggle. Mary Ritchie alone with her – Cousin Margaret left her sick bed and fainted when she saw the struggle she was living and more composed but no one allowed to see her but her Physician & Mary Ritchie. Sarah has been much shocked by this sad event – she says that she never expected to outlive my Cousin affectionately yours Mary

1. John Henry Hobart, *A Funeral Address Delivered at the Interment of the Right Rev. Benjamin Moore: On Friday the first day of March 1816, in Trinity Church: to which is annexed an appendix on the place of departed spirits and the descent of Christ into Hell* (New York, 1816).

118 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 28 APRIL 1844

Your letter my dear Mary was received yesterday, and I am truly glad to find that you have entirely recovered from your recent indisposition. I do not hear from you as frequently as I wish, but at the same time I bear in mind that my pen is more inactive than it was as "face answers to face," so must pen to pen. It is a painful fact that as we advance in the Vale of Life many of the occupations of earlier years become distasteful, among them we may {*illegible*} letter writing. The rays of the Sun do not shine upon us as brightly as in days gone by, and the flowers that bordered our pathway are withered and dead. I often think of those lines in one of our Church hymns so illustrative of the fleeting nature of terrestrial joys.

> The morning cloud – the evening dew
> The withering grass – the fading flower
> Of Earthly hopes are emblems true
> The glory of the passing hour.[1]

Some writer says – "First our flowers die, and then

our hopes, and then our fears, and when
All these are dead, the debt is due,
Dust claims dust, and we die too."[2]

I received a beautiful letter from little George Jones three days since. It was to inform me that Cousin Margaret was better, but he thought her composure forced – she was early disciplined to bear misfortunes and commenced life by sacrificing herself to others. Her history is like a Romance, but her health sunk under her efforts. Poor Mary Ritchie in addition to her recent bereavement has just heard of the dangerous illness of her Brother Edmund[3] – I feel anxious to know the result – He is the favorite brother of Mary and he was the favorite nephew of both my Cousins. His life, a most valuable one, five helpless children dependant upon him and a wife. It is one of the greatest trials of faith to see valuable lives taken, and worthless ones preserved. We know that it is done in Wisdom, and that hereafter all darkness will be removed, and hidden things will be revealed to us. Every friend that preceeds us to the Eternal world, weakens our hold upon this, for nothing here can fill the blank created in our affections. – Little George Jones bids fair to be a most useful and estimable character, if his life is spared. He is only 16 and performs already duties with a fidelity and ability that few men of riper years could do. His religious and moral education has been most strictly attended to. He has been every thing to my Cousins, and his sympathies seem to have been deeply enlisted in their sufferings. They wrote to me in the winter that his tender care and watchfulness over his Mother was beautiful. He never left her but from necessity. Good Children are the staff of Age. Mrs. Jones wrote me the particulars of my cousin Eliza's death. She had been indisposed from the prevailing Epidemic, but was well enough to walk out, and was only confined to her bed on the day of the night that her spirit left its earthly tenement. Mary Ritchie heard her knock, and went in to her room found her suffering from oppression at her chest, and seated her in a chair and while Mary was supporting her, she embraced her very tightly (as if to bid her farewell) which induced Mary to look into her face, she saw that she was dying. Cousin Margaret who was ill in bed hearing a noise went into the room, and on seeing her Sister fainted away, and was taken up and carried to her bed – they never met again. *What*

a separation! Margaret is now the last of her name on that side of the family. I trust that Mary Ritchie will be a comfort to her as long as the feeble pulse of life remains in her. The Dr. watched by her expecting every moment that it would be extinct but repeated anodynes promoted sleep, and sleep somewhat resuscitated her exhausted frame. As far back as my memory can go, I remember Cousin Eliza. Every Member of our family loved her, but there were two that she seemed most particularly to distinguish and I was one of them. My Father I have always heard loved her as if she had been his own Child. I always associated her with past happiness and I still unite her with "the loved and lost."[4] The other night I dreamed of seeing her among them cheerful and happy. I have not yet written to Margaret – I am afraid of exciting her. I have written to Mary R. all that I would have said to her. Some weeks ago dear Mary we had some shrimps pickled for you, but trouble banishes every day events from the mind. This morning I had them packed in a box with 4 Hams – 2 Bottles of Tomatoes Ketchup and some Ground Nuts – The sooner you eat the Shrimps the better as it is our first attempt at putting them up, they may not keep. Let me know if they arrived in good preservation.

I wrote to you by Mr. John Bolton and sent to you a parcel for Miss Bayard and one for Elizabeth. I have been much interested in the newspapers you sent also in the Millenarian. I intend that Berta shall commence a Scrap book with some of the pieces. What a beautiful extract that was from a Sermon of Baptist Noels!

Love to all in which mine unites. I could say more but my paper admonishes me to stop. The Box will go in the Lamar on Thursday next. Your affect. Mary

1. This hymn can be found in its entirety in *The Christian Sunday School Hymnal* (St. Louis, 1888). It appears to have been written by an English Congregationalist named David Everard Ford (1797–1875).

2. From lines 8–11 of Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "Death." The original reads, "first our pleasures dies." It is unclear in which edition she first came across these lines.

3. John Edmund Ritchie.

4. Possibly taken from Felicia Dorothea Hemans, *The Vespers of Palermo in Five Acts* (1823), 5.3.

119 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 4 JULY [? 1844][1]

I have just received your letter my dear Mary and in the midst of confusion and bustle will attempt to answer it on this memorable day which in my days of youthful enthusiasm was hailed with great joy, next to Christmas day in my early affections. How the picture is reversed, the rejoicing makes me sad and I feel as if I have no patriotism left when I hear "the spirit stirring drum and the ear piercing fife without emotion."[2]

We have tarried very late this season, owing to Mrs. Telfairs indisposition, and if she had consented to go into the interior we should have gone with her, but she thinks that the climate of Savannah suits her in Summer better than a cooler one – She sent Berta to the Montpellier Institute established by Bishop Elliott, which is said to be an excellent School. The Teachers are all English selected by a friend of his in London. They are all religious Women and thoroughly well educated. I saw a beautiful letter from Mrs. Roberts the principal of the school to Mrs. Telfair respecting Berta she concludes by saying that her prayers were offered up morning and evening to be directed from above to do that which was best for the spiritual & temporal improvement of Berta. I think that she is in excellent hands – my only fears are concerning her health she has no constitution and excessive indulgence has made her inert both in body and mind. Mrs. Telfairs inducement for sending her to Montpellier was that it was near her and *a Southern Climate* – she is strongly prejudiced against the climate of the North even in Summer. I try to realise that a wise Providence guides and rules over all things, and that her decision may be for the best, but as you remark second causes will occupy our minds when we ought to look to the First Cause. It grieved me to see such good materials running to waste without a restraining hand. William Drayton urged Mrs. T. to send her to School – He thinks that she is better any where than at home – He has had opportunities of seeing how entirely she was left to herself. I am deeply interested in poor little Berta and would do any thing for her improvement. I will not write any more on the subject but talk it over when we meet which I trust will be soon – We sail in the Clinton on the 10th of this month which is next Monday. I hear terrible accounts of the Influenza in New York but it will be over I hope before we arrive there – I have become so *anti-locomotive* that I dread moving if it was not for my anticipated *Chats* with you & Fr., I doubt if I could muster courage to leave Home. It will be

dissipation to me to take tea with you and my Cousins in Philadelphia for I have been a Prisoner in our own Walls all winter except occasional visits to C Bulloch who came in and spent a week with me. Poor Soul she suffered with nervous headache almost the whole time. She went with me to Church which was a great effort, and shewed much Christian humility by doing so for just this time last year he was dismissed from it. She has no neighbor except the Methodist Clergyman for whom she has formed quite a friendship Mr. Bayard (brother of Mrs. Wilson the Missionary) intends removing there for the summer – I sent to your care a sermon for Miss Bayard not knowing her direction – Mr. Hodgson sent her an Italian sentence on the first page.

As I have few ideas left, you will excuse this barren production – I hope the sea air will freshen up my intellect. Love to all your affectionate Mary

1. The date of this letter is suggested by Mary Telfair's references to William Bulloch's bankruptcy in Letters 113 (26 January 1843) and 114 (10 February 1843).

2. *Othello*, 3.4.

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Undated Letters

Many of Mary Telfair's letters indicated only the day and month but not the year in which they were written. Contemporary postmarks did likewise. Internal references to births, deaths, marriages, and other known events as well as to various works read and cited by Mary Telfair for which publication dates are known enable us to narrow down the time frame in which these letters were penned. Those selected for inclusion here do not necessarily appear in the order of their composition, as there is no way of establishing the exact year in which they were written.

120 SABINE FIELDS, GEORGIA, 14 JANUARY [? 1814/1815][1]

If it was in my power dear Mary to convey to you the pleasure a letter of yours never fails to create, you would not only be very *vain* but continue to exercise your powers of charming by indulging your friend more frequently with your animated effusions; the last found me in a gloomy mood or rather a *reflecting* one, it made me smile very often and mentally exclaim how like the Molly I loved in childhood and how like the friend of maturer age! my opinion of Letters corresponds with that of the tuneful Pope although neither a "banished Lover" or a "captive maid" to me there cannot be a higher gratification than that of hearing often from those endeared to me by the ties of kindred or sympathy.[2] I believe you are correct Mary in thinking that a perfect similarity of character is not essential to love, for instance two persons of a pensive cast of mind being continually in the society of each other would in time become stupid therefore I think Virtues happily blended with opposite dispositions suit better, apropos Mr. Campbell and Miss Hull, well may the world wonder at a Woman of sense

uniting herself to a Man so wholly inferior. I verily suspect the idea of his being of a *great family* and possessing a large fortune had some influence with the Lady for I have never been able to discover any great intrinsic merit and he is certainly devoid of talents not only "*goosish*" my dear Mary but (between you & I) an absolute *goose* and I hope his fair partner will at some future period regret leaving her Family & House to dwell in a strange land with an irrational companion, perhaps she wants *Soul* for she could not feel that attachment for such a man as to induce her to sacrifice so much for him instead I think she evinced a want of proper pride in bestowing her hand on any one while the honor of her Station was suspected, suppose he is sentenced to be shot what will be her feelings! they can be better imagined than described, it was at *Peets* (your inconstant *friends*) that I saw Miss H. and was pleased with her conversation as Mrs. C – I assure you Mr. Ebenezer Harlow Cumming was not the person I alluded to, for he is not personally acquainted with either Sarah or myself. How came you acquainted with that Gentleman! I know him too well from character and when he solicited to be introduced to me at a Ball I refused the Gentleman this whose medium the request was made for I had often heard him spoken of as an artful unprincipled Man particularly regardless of truth, I could tell you of a great many more tales respecting him that would excite your contempt ridicule & abhorrence but I find he is a Man of some consequence at the northward and it would be a pity to mention any thing that could injure him for probably he has *reformed* perhaps pique at our refusing to become acquainted with his Lordship has induced him to register us in his *scandalous chronicle* for he proclaimed us in Georgia to be *proud* & *satyrical* moreover declared me to be an *intimate acquaintance* of his.

Savannah has been in an *uproar* at the arrival of a fashionable London Belle who plays off her airs & graces inimitably, she not only *shakes hands* with the Beaux but sports her figure in the Waltz with a young Physician she abuses us all for being distant & reserved says in England it is customary for the Ladys to make the first advances but I hope that custom will never (for the honor of my country women) be introduced here, I think the character of a mere fashionable, a miserable one, take them from the splendors of a crowded scene and the admiration of a few *flatterers of the day* and they are nothing.

The Giaour by Lord Byron I have read there is nothing very interesting

in the Tale but there are some exquisitely fine passages in it, he is at times beautifully pathetic & extremely melancholy indeed he must have been a disaffected character and if I mistake not a dissipated one, he seems to have rivalled Scott as a poet although his Muse is of a different cast the one is wild & playful following nature in all her rambles, the other dark, gloomy mysterious and often grandly sublime. I scarcely know which to give the preference to I *adore* one & admire the other. Have you seen a piece of American poetry entitled an Ode to Ocean? It is very fine – I prefer it greatly to the prize poem which wants originality the authors name is Holland[3] – I have just taken up the Scottish Fiddle – which appears to be very amusing I confess I am fond of the burlesque.[4]

As you are a *knowing* Politician I must ask your opinion respecting the late rumor that in a few weeks the olive branch will once more flourish in our Country but I hope the recollection of the *Laurel* will never fade from the minds of any who call themselves Americans.

I was so certain of your being in Washington that I sent my love to you in a letter to my Brother who I intended offering you as a *Cicerbo* for the Winter if your taste is similar to mine you prefer married Men to single.[5] I believe one reason is we know them better and entertain no apprehensions of being pleased or pleasing too much – human nature is full of contradiction and that is a proof of it. I sometimes think I am the *queerest* animal in creation and feel not a little elated when I meet with one as *queer* as myself well Mary as it is decreed that we should not meet this year let us look forward with hope to the next. treasure up all you have *seen heard* or *fancied* and we will regale each other – it will be an odd compound.

1. That this letter was written sometime before 1818 is evident from references to her brother Thomas, who died in that year. A date of 1814 or early 1815 is supported by mention of the possibility of a peace treaty between Britain and the United States that would end the War of 1812.

2. Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, line 52.

3. Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819–1881). In 1870 Holland founded *Scribner's Monthly* and remained editor of it until his death.

4. James Kirke Paulding, *The Lay of the Scottish Fiddle: A Tale of Havre de Grace* (New York, 1813), a parody of Walter Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

5. Thomas Telfair was the only one of Mary's brothers who married.

121 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 26 MAY [1823 OR 1824][1]

It is unnecessary for me to express to you my dear Mary the pleasure which your letters afford me, the promptitude with which they are answered sufficiently evince the value attached to them – whenever a *pause* occurs in our correspondence the delinquency may always be traced to you, however of late we have kept up a brisk intercourse, prophetic I hope of the long confabs we are to *enjoy* this summer – Sarah and myself talk over every day the pleasure we anticipate in visiting you I always turn her into the garden with your Papa to *scheme*, while you & I roam in the woods. I know not whether I am happily or unhappily constituted but certain it is that I enjoy some things in this world as keenly as I did at sixteen – The beauties of Nature the works of art, friendship and *good* society have greater charms for me now than they ever had, is this a problem too difficult for you to solve? or is it explicable. I am not so prone to extraordinary excitement as I used to be but I am usually chearful unless *a cause* damps me. I believe a frequent change of scene though it has a tendency to encourage instability and prevent the growth of regular habits is of essential advantage to the mind & temper it gives new energies to the former while it softens the latter chearfulness ought to be sedulously cultivated, and may rank as a cardinal virtue I will place it if you have no objection next to faith and charity, for it sheds a benign lustre over domestic life and were I a "Coelebs in search of a Wife" next to *consistency* I would desire a chearful temper. Gay people are very annoying to me I always find them boisterous and usually devoid of delicacy & feelings. What different materials we eliminate in Character as we advance in life, how insipid many appear in after life that charmed us in early youth, this is a melancholy fact – and the only *solid* objection I can find to early matches; for the brightest illusions like the most dazzling sunbeams must depart – I have always found when disposed to arrain others so much to humble me in *self* that I am *obliged to be lenient* – when I reflect upon "years gone by" and retrace my foolish career I blush to think how completely I have been the creature of errors and impulse – but I have improved and hope if life is prolonged to improve still more – Like you my dear Mary I have found from experience that *this World* cannot satisfy me – and like you I am convinced "there's nothing true but Heaven" and yet this restless soul will hover round the empty joys of earth. But I must no

longer indulge in this strain of egotism there is something about you that invites it for I never talk half as much about myself to any one else.

Am I not a Prophetess of the first order! the wild and centric Norma compared with my *seer like* qualities – do you know Alexander (who mortals seldom move) places great faith in my predictions. I suppose I derive this *talent* from my claims to scottish descent – Take care that I do not pronounce upon your destiny this summer, and with all your *boasted* adherence to *single* plans (with one *wave of my magic wand*) *double* them. – I predicted that Frances would be *matromized* – a similar prophecy was made on Sarah Jones notwithstanding *Nature* and *Art* conspired to make her a complete Spinster for except Harriette I have never known at her age such fixed habits, so much *particularity* in {*illegible*} such calm indifference to "les usages du monde" in fact tho I love them both very much I always feel when I am with them as if they were *a hundred*. I predict that Harriette will follow Sarah's example she feels the loneliness of her situation now more than ever, Sarah stealing a march upon her, has saddened my poor little friend very much, for she calculated that Sarah and herself would gently glide along the vale of life hand in hand – but alas! alas! human hopes & prospects are vain! Hal was about creating a little Paradise, she commenced building a House designed a spot for a garden and looked forward to Sarah & herself inhabiting it like our first parents in blooming Eden culling flowers and enjoying a life of ease and tranquillity but the *tempter* came – remember I do not say he *quoiled* himself into the heart of one – for believe me when I say that I think Sarah's happiness will be greatly encreased by the change. I like her intended better than I expected – he is artificial but a most agreeable companion the most perfect contrast to her in every thing as much so as Conrad to Medora[2] – he reminds me of Rashleighs baldistone[3] in some respects – particularly the style of his eloquence. You recollect Dr. Vernon says I cannot exactly remember his words but the import was this – If he could meet with a *blind* mistress never was man surer of a Conquest – but the charm created by the eloquence of the tongue was dissolved by the eye – this is precisely the case with Mr. C – he converses delightfully but his air, look, and manner were not formed in Natures finest mould Sarah Haig who will speak her mind boldly on all occasions declares he is too ugly to love but she sees

every thing through a medium different from other folkes – She longs to get hold of Ann to give her a drilling hope to see you summer indeed if nothing unforeseen occurs we shall sail the latter end of June – Bristol is to be head quarters but S & myself will find our way to you as speedily as possible. Our kind remembrance to all.

Who writes longer letters to you than I do – Has the Bairne arrived yet? Do write as soon as it enters this world of care. your sincere Mary

1. The date of this letter is suggested by the fact that Frances Few Chrystie's children were born in 1823 (William) and 1824 (Mary). It is unclear which of them Mary Telfair was enquiring about.

2. Conrad and Medora are characters in Byron's *Corsair*.

3. This seems to be a reference to Rashleigh Osbaldistone, a character in Scott's *Rob Roy*.

122 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 12 NOVEMBER [IN OR BEFORE 1828][1]

If I am not mistaken my dear Mary you are in arrears to me, but as there ought to be no ceremony in friendships I will *forgive the debt* and again commence pouring forth my *lucubrations* to you not from my *elbow chair*, not feeling quite old enough for so luxurious a retreat, but in sober earnestness. Why have you remained so long silent? A letter from Park Place (always acceptable) would have been doubly aye trebly so in the Country where my eye for weeks never rested on the pages of a new work but fortunately our Bookseller sent up a small collection the day previous to our departure and as we journeyed down *in snails pace* I had a fine opportunity of feasting upon the Legends of Montrose,[2] it is inferior in interest to the first series of Tales but upon the whole I was much pleased with the characters introduced particularly Montrose – there is something *deep toned* if I may use the expression in all those productions and from the poetical imagery which prevails throughout – I think Walter Scott must be the Author I was before hand in "Rambles through Italy" – Mrs. Wright recommended it to me in Philadelphia and as soon as I finished *my rambles* last fall I followed Mr. Sloane through regions I am sorry to say far more delightful[3] – I am glad you agree with me in liking them for Sarah Cecil condemned my *flowery* taste because I spoke highly of them – I begin to like every thing now that is *solid* and *real* and wish I could sooner have

discovered *precious ore* from *base alloy* – when we meet we will *compare notes* and discover whether you or I have changed most since we separated there was more room for improvement in me, no flattery my dear but unvarnished truth.

We made a delightful visit on our way from Jefferson to an elderly Gentleman & Lady. I dare say your Father recollects Mr. Urkhart for he enquired after you all – he is united to a very fine Woman and they seem as happy in their embowering shades as our first Parents were in Eden – I was charmed with their style of living, so rational and simply elegant, their hospitality seemed to flow from the heart alone – and they seem fitted by Nature and education for a Country life, which after all is the happiest – This city intercourse is a heartless thing unless people rush into every species of amusement they find very little society to please their taste.

A week has winged its silent flight since we returned to Savannah I have been *housed* all that time – I am ashamed to confess, after the wholesome advice I gave you in my last that I have been in a *deep fit of the Blues.* – I cannot describe to you the gloom which hangs over my spirits upon my first arrival in this place I reason in vain with myself but when I see those around me depressed I think there is some excuse for me. This is a season of pleasure to the Inhabitants of the South they hail it as the Harbinger of Health & gaiety but I can participate in none of those feelings for at a period when those blessings were generally diffused were we visited by affliction – but on this subject I must be silent – submission is the lot of Mortals and I acquiesce in all the dispensations of Providence for I know that they are wisely ordered.

I perceive by the Newspapers that Mary Wallace has returned with Mrs. Clay – oh! that you could have summoned courage enough to leave home & crossed the "vast deep" – it would have been only for a winter unless some *eloquent* Son of the South could have prevailed upon you to remain here *for life*, I would from selfish considerations espouse his cause – We have *a Hero* living opposite to us if his Maison was *a story higher* I might tell you a pretty story about him but why not grace a Cottage, we might be as sociable on the first floor as we could be *in a Garret* – Frances I suppose would have a few words to say in favor of *her element* but we would not *consult* her *elevated* Ladyship upon the business. – Catharine Hunter told me that Frances spoke of coming out with Mrs. Matthau I was elated for a

moment but began to fear the news was too good to be true – she cheated me once and I am afraid to trust in hope again – I must see Mrs. Howard and know all about it – Sarah boasts of her *Seerism* and says she knows she will come – she sees it all before her, and comforts herself with the idea of having some one *to mope* with her but Frances must *turn out* we will have a *muster* on the occasion and she will I know be pronounced *fit for service* – I will be *her aid* and "shoulder my crutch" and then we will shew how "Fields are {*illegible*}" – well I hope my nonsense amuses you – it has made me laugh for the first time for many days – you know I am full of extremes either *crying* or *laughing* so you will excuse my *enthusiastic folly*.

I *must* hope that if we do live to see the next summer and visit the north that you will be *tempted* by my persuasive powers to return with me – I will promise to be *led* by you as long as you are with me, what more can I do! We will talk over {*illegible*} scheme by & by – This is spring weather {*illegible*} very bad {*illegible*} feelings for I am too languid either to {*illegible*} or walk – but {*illegible*} too much so to *confabulate* with thee my Molly – Did you see Mrs. Wayne last Summer – she is the Madame de Stael of Georgia – she even *gossips* in an elegant style – I should like to hear your opinion of her she is the only fascinating acquaintance I have, we are wonderfully sociable when we meet, but not at all intimate I admire her mind excessively – her character has no very high claims to superiority – she is *too worldly* to interest me who does not enter into her view of human life.

I feel disposed to give you a *thundering* scold for permitting a host of Southerners to return without bearing a line from you – What a lazy creature you are – Uncle Jones and Sarah are hourly expected – and we expect a retinue of relations (some new to us) from England. I dread the contrast which our sombre phizes will afford to their smiling ones however I shall be rejoiced to see them.

I have been interrupted by a long visit from a new acquaintance a *Northern* Beau a little inclined to be *dandyish* – I have talked myself *hoarse* my words did not flow *sweetly* Margaret however relieved me from the task by making her entrée – Sarah Cecil I understand has given her *Episcopalian Lover* a final dismission from all that I have heard I cannot say I regret it – she is expected in town in a few days – poor Mrs. Henry is far advanced

in a decline – I feel much for the Minises who are absorbed in her – she has much to make life desirable – a very devoted Husband and affectionate Relatives.

The only excuse I can make for sending such a scrawl is the hope it will bring a letter from my very dear Mary affectionately yours MT

1. That this letter was written in or before 1828 is indicated by Mary Telfair's reference to William Few in the present tense.

2. Walter Scott, *A Legend of Montrose* (London, 1822).

3. James Sloan, *Rambles Through Italy, in the Years 1816–17* (Baltimore, 1818).

123 MECHANIC HALL, NEW YORK CITY, 3 AUGUST [IN OR BEFORE 1832?][1]

We had my dear Molly a most fatiguing ride, but nevertheless enjoyed the beautiful fairy land over which we passed with the rapidity of poor Ichabod when pursued by the redoubtable Bron Bones; one or two *frights* gave me a head ache which only deserted me this Morning for you must know the rattlings of carriages combined with the sight of Alexander & Margaret waiting to receive us shook my nerves so severely that it was four oclock before I could *launch* my poor shattered *barque* on the shore of morpheus and just as my senses were steeped into forgetfulness the chimney sweepers *rattle* aroused me I arose unrefreshed and exhibited an appearance so woe begone that I might have passed for one from the land of spirits – How can any one be so tasteless as to remain in a City during the summer from choice – the air here is like a furnace and the noise equal to the confusion of Babel my Sing Sing *appetite* has vanished and so has Sarahs we live on tea – Our Beau delivered us up to Alexander and went to Bunkers, he was delighted with you all from beginning to end – Matilda seems to have made the *strongest* impression she must be the *Calypso* that threw a charm over the woods and rocks of Mount Pleasant for he says he felt disposed to spend *a Month* with you he is a good hearted fellow and was to use his own expression *devoted* to our comfort – We have been in cog ever since our arrival for the weather is too warm to *see or be seen* – on tuesday I mean to call at Greenwich on wednesday we shall leave New York – Alexander & Margaret were very anxious to visit you but as they both suffered from travelling through the heat I could not in my conscience

much as I wished them to go to Sing Sing *sanction* it – if the stage went off at six oclock it would be different but I suffered so much from the *banging* given to my poor bones for we came *full gallop* that I would recommend only a *Hercules* (such as our beau) to undertake it at this season of the year I hope in the autumn that they will be able to spend a day or two with you – Margaret is very much disappointed and I have *dipped* my tongue in such *glowing* colours that Alexanders *curiosity* which usually slumbers has been awakened to the beauties of "the rocks" – I really think the sight of Field's *'Farcery'* would tempt him to speculate if your Papa could make as good a bargain for us as for himself – but I doubt whether it would accord with Margarets taste if Mrs. {*illegible*} could be certain *of you all for life* we might give up the world for *a few* but Margaret like Matilda likes a *wider range* she thinks a cottage on Bristol banks would be quite as agreeable and admit of more *variety* for then you would all visit us there. – I mean to *manage* matters so as to have a little spot somewhere at the north and if I cannot have you to visit me in Georgia *must* have you in this, (to me) *far more agreeable land*, this last trip has completely *subjugated* my affections, am wholly disposed to a northern residence for *half the year* at least, and now much as I hate *responsibility* all my *energies* shall be exercised to accomplish it if Sarah will cooperate with me – I have nothing pleasant to relate to you my dear Molly, only this I can say that I reflect & talk with much delight of the happy month spent beneath your hospitable roof and expect to see no one this summer that can supply your loss as a *tete a tete* companion – Sarah gives a fine account of our *nocturnal orgies* she says she would have fattened still more if *our tongues* could have been quelled, but their *incessant din* nearly crazed her, she has *caricatured* us completely, and finished the picture drawn by Matilda for Frances, though not *headed* by "Men of talents". – Ponder this illegible scrawl it is intended for no eye but yours. – If we go to {*illegible*} which is not yet reduced to a certainty cannot either you or Matilda contrive to meet us there if your Papa can part with one of you. Our united regards to your family – remember us to Miss Buchanan affectionately yours

1. That this letter was written in or before 1832 – and probably in the 1820s – is indicated by Mary Telfair's reference to her brother Alexander.

124 RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, 11 OCTOBER [IN OR BEFORE 1832][1]

We have arrived in Richmond dear Mary after a very pleasant journey from Baltimore I could discern the effects of slavery as soon as I entered Maryland, in vain did my eye wander in search of cultivated farms, and stone fences, with all the *dear etceteras* which flourish in Pennsylvania that land of beauty, neatness, and comfort. – Maryland & Virginia are *twin Sisters* to Georgia, the former however bears infinitely more the marks of taste and improvement than the latter, I was delighted with Baltimore and the people they appear to be so hospitable and warm hearted the manners and customs very similar to those of Georgia I should like to live there very much it seems to combine the advantages of the more northern and southern states and must be a very delightful place in the winter season.

I visited your Aunt Maria, her appearance is changed but she still has a most interesting face, her manners conversation &c pleased me more than one I saw in Maryland indeed in any part of the world Alexander was more captivated with her and Mrs. Wright than any of the young Belles he has seen, I was *bewitched* by Mrs. Montgommery she is exactly to my taste – a woman that I could love dearly for her heart seems equal to her mind.

Mary Nicholson is a pleasing Girl, very much like Matilda, I do not think either her sister or herself as pretty as Mrs. Wright. I have been told by several persons since I commenced my travels that I looked like you, which is certainly a compliment to me but there can be no real resemblance for you are *white,* and I am *black* however we *think* alike, and that is quite sufficient to make us friends *for life* – how comes on your *ruminations* in the *attic?* I long to hear from you, either you or Frances ought to spend this winter with me, Mrs. Howard my dernier resource *must* bring one of you out with her, believe me it only requires a little *mental* exertion to combat all difficulties – to receive a visit from you has always been my fondest wish but I never could urge you to come as I believed no inducement could tempt *a Few* to Georgia.

This is the spot so eloquently described by the fascinating pen of the author of the British Spy,[2] but I see nothing in it to admire, nothing to awaken the Song of the Poet – however I must make due allowances for *amor patriae*, and a glowing imagination for it requires the aid of both to make Richmond a beautiful spot indeed I am dreadfully disappointed in

every part of Virginia, every thing wears the air of decay may well it be called "the *ancient* dominions" the epithet which a Virginian in the pride of his heart delights to bestow on this *ruinous* looking country, believe me when I say it is *inferior* to Georgia; my state although it has never been cried up as the land of *valor*, *beauty* and *enthusiasm*, is a far more flourishing one, I acknowledge the superiority of the northern states over it, but not the southern. – This is a gloomy day and I am not weather proof either in body or in mind so pardon the *Stupidozas* for they seize me with as much violence at times as the *pensirozas*, do the poor Italians Cicesbeo – if I had you here I could tell you of some little adventures too trifling to occupy space in a letter but which though they might only produce a *philosophical* smile from you, would set Frances *expert* risibles into *a roar*, – I have had Mrs. Opie to keep me company on my way – she generally suits *the temper of my Soul* – read her last tales, there are two that I think will please you – "White Lies" and "the confessions of an odd tempered man" the rest are romantic *love sick* things, which *you* & *I* ought not to *patronise* as we are rare instances of two Ladies arriving at a *certain* age without feeling the influence of *la belle* passion, it does not I hope denote that we are *heartless.*[3]

We left Jabez *studying* in Philadelphia – Your favorite Mr. Douglass called very often to see us in Baltimore. I wish we could *quack* him up he would if he had only health be the very man for Frances he would suit her (although not a Divine) almost as well as Mr. Phelps do you tell her I say so and that she must not *lash* me for it that I think him the *best of men* – Give my love to Mrs. Howard and to all your family and write soon to your affectionate Mary

1. That this letter was written in or before 1832 – and probably during the 1820s – is indicated by Mary Telfair's reference to her brother Alexander.

2. William Wirt, *The Letters of a British Spy* (1803).

3. These two stories appear in the second volume of Opie's *New Tales* (Philadelphia, 1818).

125 RETREAT [PLANTATION, JEFFERSON COUNTY, GEORGIA] N.D.[1]

I have been thinking and talking a great deal of you this morning my dear Mary, and as I have given such ample exercise to my *brain*, and

my *tongue*, the pen that able enterpreter of both must be called into action, and have its portion of *fatigue*, while the former rests from its *toils*. You know I am a friend to *moderation* although so unhappily *constructed* that I never practise it, so prepare yourself for a letter of *immoderate* length, for I cannot exactly penetrate into the cause but whenever I am in the country my *loquacity* is greater than when inhaling the noxious air of the City, and I always write longer letters, perhaps it is a *sudden expansion of the heart* which produces this revolution, certain it is that the *head* remains in *status quo*. You see I have the *temerity* to write latin without understanding six words of it for it is indeed a *dead* language to me, as well as to you, but if I had my life to go over again I would learn it and every other language that is *teachable*, indeed a correct knowledge of *living* languages is in my opinion far preferable to a *string of useless accomplishments*, which are generally relinquished before the bloom of youth fades, and there is no intellectual resource left to bear up against the inroads of that greatest of all aggressors Time – he is certainly a deadly foe to the body, but a friend to the mind, and character, the one he strengthens and improves, the other he ameliorates, I am so satisfied of this that I would not be sixteen again not to enjoy *sixteen thousand pleasures*, to persons who profess little vanity, and a slender stock of animal spirits the Vale of life must have some *flowers*, although we are told by the wise and witty Lady Montague[2] that it is a difficult task to grow old gracefully, she did not however find it so. – Are you not dear Mary tired of my lucubrations and are you not disposed to think of me a *prosing animal*! I feel that I am, but at the same time rest assured that you will pardon egotism &c for I am vegitating in a spot not very productive in materials for letters, you have often heard me deprecate *Plantations* and contrast them with the fine looking Farms, and elegant country seats at the north, so rich in all that can delight the eye or satisfy the taste, but I always contrive to make myself *contented* wherever I am – retirement accords with my taste, it is friendly to the growth of virtue, there all our best feelings originate and are nourishing but *Solitude* I detest, we were formed for *social intercourse* and a human being who seeks delight in *woods* and *wilds* is one degree higher than a *Quadruped*. I used to think it sounded very sweetly in Poetry, but as *a matter of fact Being* I like always to be encircled by a few agreeable persons, and do not exactly agree with my favorite Bard and Matilda's *Tutelary Saint* in thinking –

> There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
> There is rapture on the lonely shore,
> There is society where none intrudes
> By the deep sea and music in its roar[3]

That will do *occasionally*, but not always – gloomy feelings require the chearful converse of happier minded people to dispel don't you think so? for you are sometimes *a victim* to them.

I am summonsed to dinner and as I have a *country appetite* must leave you for the *vulgar* enjoyment of eating do not be surprised at my preferring it, pour le present, generally speaking when I am deeply interested in conversation I am insensible either to beneficial effects of *food* or *sleep* to the last named article you can bear ample testimony for many a night have we spent together in Park Place without being able after *incessant* talking to invoke the aid of Morpheus – I think I would have *enjoyed* the summer at the north far more than I did the last for several reasons which I need not give but next summer if nothing unforeseen occurs to prevent I hope to visit that *land beloved* and to see you all well and happy. You sometimes no doubt permit your mind to refer to the period spent at Saratoga it had its pleasures, mine was derived solely from the *Chamber Coterie* which to a *sober* listener must have appeared like midnight *orgies*, I left Mr. Glen one of the *Hero's* of the *convention*, in a *languishing* state, I am afraid if he does not change the climate, his mind will lose its *pristine vigor*.

Sarah Cecil is on Wilmington, I *suspect* she means to desert *the Sisterhood* next winter, she will be a loss to us for when a friend marries we must be prepared to lose in a great measure her society – *a new object* and new {*illegible*} cast a slight shade of oblivion over *departed* friendships, although I am very glad to find that she has met with a man who she is sufficiently attached to, to marry, yet at the same time I feel a great regret at parting with her she has so many excellent qualities, and we have been so long intimate that I wonder how I bear it *philosophically* – once I should have *deplored* it as a *calamity* but great trials have enabled me not only to support, but to become insensible to little ones – and I believe I could now part with a relation to *old Hymen, provided their happiness depended upon it* – Sarah Haig who is *very conceited* in some things, and *a Seer* of the first order, *prophecies* on this occasion but I will not proclaim her *cog-*

itations and you must not mine for perhaps the *silken knot* may never be tied. – Two people coming together in *holy* wedlock always reminds me of two Birds in a Cage unless they sing in Concert, what *discord* ensues – far better to *chirp* tune their notes on some lonely spray, *unseen unheard* in "single blessedness," for a *solus* well performed, is preferable to an indifferent *Duett* – I have heard that Sarah's *Intended* possesses some excellent traits of character, but is not blest with a good temper however she can yeild to his whims if she is very much attached to him – his talents do not rise above mediocrity, but he is respected in his profession, and if he is not in the road to *fame*, he is to *wealth*, and upon the whole I am *reconciled* to it – Remember that you keep secret what I have written – not in Ann Wallaces *style* however, but in your own *true* and *faithful* way –

A thousand good wishes, and much love to my dear Frances who I am afraid will turn *Poet* if she does not descend from the Garret – tell her to address her finest *Sonnet* to me and I will *reward* her most *magnificently* for the effusion to Washington, Wilkes County, Georgia Farewel Mary

1. The placement of this letter is suggested by the reference to the possible marriage of Sarah Cecil in the near future. As the following letter indicates, the marriage never took place.

2. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762), the poet, essayist, and travel writer.

3. From Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

126 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 30 MARCH [IN OR AFTER 1824][1]

I cannot *divine* with all my *oracular* powers (for you know I proved myself *a Seer* last summer) what has become of my letters to you – no *mysterious* Agent of hope has interfered to disturb the communions of absent friends, for certain it is that my punctuality as a correspondent continues undiminished and I consider your friendship and letters one of my consolations in this my earthly pilgrimage. *Mrs. Eggs* whose privilege it is to read your letters after me, bids me say your last found us precisely in the same mood with yourself, of course it was perused by both with *peculiar interest* – Though separated by distance we have been *haunted* by the same fiend *Ennui* for I must come boldly out and call things by their right names – The wretch often *pounces* on me with its Eagle Talons in the midst of occupation – I find the atmosphere more congenial to *his* approach

(for I must make a *He* of such a monster) sometimes than at others. Yesterday was one of my happiest days you ought to have been with me for I commenced at breakfast (in a gale of spirits) with a story that made my philosophic Brother laugh until he had to hold his sides, towards evening I became quite *obstreperous* in my mirth, which was increased by a circle of intimates – today the *mental* Thermometer has fallen, and I am myself again.

So Matilda's *Croney* Mareann is married – I hope she will be happy, she is deserving of it – and has that happy mediocrity of character which will ensure at least contentment.

If I was the mother of children the first lesson I would teach them would be *moderation* it should be the watchword that should echo from the Drawing Room to the Nursery from thence to the Kitchen – how can any one leave human plants to Nature to be the sport of feeling, and nursed by *Accident*. It is better to undergo the severest discipline which *english* system can devise than to be the creature of impulse – I perfectly agree with you in thinking that *english nerves* are differently strung from ours, for certain it is they *smile* where we *groan* – *laugh* where we *cry* – this proves the power of education, and the necessity of early controlling the feelings in order to make us consistent, useful and happy.

I am glad to hear Matilda enjoyed herself so much among *her Cousins*. I wish I had *a land of Cousins* to go to, for I have a *large* heart which could contain as much love again as at present fills it.

Mrs. Merriott and ourselves tried to trace relationships and without finding any more clue than *name* having as old Mr. Beekerman said no *geological* Tree to seize by its *branches*, we concluded that we must be fourteenth cousins, was Matilda pleased with her she is I think a frank amiable Woman and one that I should like to see again.

Nanna has amazed me by her refusal of *the Miller* I really thought *the affair* would terminate in a union of hands as well as hearts – his attentions were too *pointed* for friendship and I thought she was more *pleased* than she was willing to acknowledge, but seriously speaking I am surprised that he did not succeed for he is good looking, and his friends say she is amiable and intelligent – but it was not *her fate*, so strongly do I believe that matches are the result of an *irresistible impulse* denominated Fate that I wonder at nothing that occurs in that way – a *chain* of circumstances often proves an

indissoluble link for example Uncle Jones match led to Sarahs and Sarah I strongly suspect will lead to Harriettes. –

I am *crazy* to read Irvings Sermons[2] having seen a criticism on them and a few extracts – he must have a wonderful effect upon his hearers – so much originality with so much brilliancy of fancy, tell Matilda as a *Man of talents* he has won my entire admiration what an interesting appearance he must possess I have *fancied* his fine *apostolic* head but from a *divine* subject I will descend to one of a mortal nature – a beautiful fiction –

I drank deep of St. Ronans[3] well and it was *sweet* to my *taste* – my whole soul was absorbed in poor Edwards fate & her beauty & character was exactly of that description to please me a union of delicacy & animation in the former – wit and sentiment in the latter – do you know it reminded me of the first impression Miss Hart made on me for you know her beauty is of the *ethereal* kind and tho she is wild & visionary, she is said to have fine talents.

We are quite uncertain what will be our destiny this Summer as soon as our plans are *matured* I will reveal them to you – the North always holds out inducements to me but it is necessary sometimes to take an upland tour.

Mary Cummings has been spending a fortnight in Savannah her health is not good – she has lately attended the wedding of her Brother Henry who is married to the most beautiful woman here in Georgia – Mrs. Carver is married to Mr. Fellow's Brother & Miss St. George to Capt. Sarees Bonaparte's Secretary Cupid & Hymen have committed sad work in that house adieu your Mary

1. That this letter was written in or after 1824 is suggested by Mary Telfair's reference to the publication of Scott's *Ronan's Well*.

2. Clearly a reference to the British Presbyterian minister Edward Irving (1792–1834), but it is unclear which of his published sermons Mary Telfair was referring to.

3. Sir Walter Scott, *Ronan's Well* (Edinburgh and London, 1824).

127 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 5 FEBRUARY [IN OR BEFORE 1832][1]

A tour of *duty* dear Mary which occupied five weeks has interrupted a correspondence which for many *many* years has been one of the sweetest solaces of my life. – I found two short letters from you on my return home – one informing me of the breach which has recently occurred in

your family – which I lament – Those sweet youths have indeed met with a sad bereavement – and at a period of life to feel it most keenly – I hope so severe an affliction has softened the rigid feelings of their father, and that he no longer considers it a sin to indulge in those innocent affections which our Creator never designed that we should steel our hearts against.

I have been thinking and *dreaming* of you dear Mary for the last fortnight – determined each day to write & each day my intention was frustrated – I feel even now *unsettled* both in mind & body but though under the influence of gloomy weather I will not defer holding a little sweet communion with you, and giving you a sort of *History* of myself – I wish you could have seen me getting into bed at an up country *Auberge* with even my shoes on, and a shawl over that vulnerable part the head – The crevices around wide enough to admit an Astronomer to watch the movements of the celestial bodies and admire the starry firmament – such weather was never known in Georgia – The Water in our Guglet which stood by a *roaring* fire was frozen in the morning – and for four days a pan of milk continued congealed – I quite *luxuriated* until we commenced our journey then I suffered from the want of *covering*. The Housekeepers at Home think only of entertaining with their *colloquial* powers – I felt inclined to *cork* one Womans Mouth, when I espied a filthy table cloth and were compelled to shiver by the side of a clay chimney as wide as the entrance to the Cave of Trophonius – The window open & both doors, in order to afford free access to Boreas Alexander was obliged to put his hat on & by the way of *hint* I got my plaid cloak & wrapped myself in it at the same time giving an *artificial* groan – but they reminded me of the fable of the old Man & rude boys who went up the apple Tree & whom neither words or grass could effect until *stones* were resorted to. – The only *gleam* of civilization that irradiated our path was a visit of two days to the Urkharts. The Lord of the Manor was absent – but we were most hospitably entertained by the Lady of the Manor – You will *smile* when I tell you three waiting Maids appeared in the morning to aid us at the Toilette – which of course we dismissed – not being accustomed to even one at our Plantation – I was never so sensible of the changes effected in southern character by frequent visits to the north – perhaps if I had lived all my life at the South I should have been as helpless as "the Infant muling & pulling its nurses arms"[2] – Our Overseers Wife made us a visit with an *Ayah* beside her – who she

immediately called upon for a glass of water – we afterwards learned that she never combed her own hair or washed her feet. – The indolence of that class of people in this country is unexampled. – I thank you for the trouble you took to procure the engravings I sent for it was the price that attracted me at Burgess's – It was an English sett & I was sure such a bargain would not remain long unsold – When you see Mary & Margaret tell them I have made them Aprons & will send them by the first vessel that sails – There is to be a Fare on Tuesday given by the Ladies of Savannah for the Benefit of the Orphan Asylum – all the Talents & industry of the *fair* Ladies has been elicited on this occasion – Margaret is *immersed* in gold paper & paste. – In my next letter, if I attend it, I will give you a *faithful* description of it – I go as a *Purchaser* not as a *Worker*. – If *cobbling* had been required I could have furnished some able specimens – I took my Basket on my arm *a la red ridinghood* a few evenings ago to Mrs. Cummings's she mustered Sarah Cecil & Catharine to meet me – work was thrown aside and we got upon *anecdote* – I believe I told half a dozen – Catharine twenty – we at length sett Mrs. Cumming almost into a *Hysterical laugh* – The grave good old Doctor looking on with perfect amazement – I returned home as usual very *compunctious* & thought of *Miss Jane Taylors* & *Miss Mary Fews* sentiments on the subject of *excitability* and determined to avoid it as sedulously in future as I do *romance reading* – The Servant waits to take this letter to the office – Adieu love to all your dear family Your sincere & ever affectionate Mary

1. That this letter was written in or before 1832 – and probably in the 1820s – is suggested by Mary Telfair's reference to her brother Alexander.

2. *As You Like It*, 2.7. The original reads "the infant mewling and puking in its nurses arms."

128 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 1 DECEMBER [IN OR BEFORE 1832][1]

My intention of writing to you, each day has been frustrated my dear Mary, an *inundation* of uninteresting visitors have occupied my time and *deluged* any ideas for that you may imagine my poor mentals are in a sad plight, *the vacuum* occasioned by a separation from you has not yet been filled, and I shall not cease to regret for the remainder of the winter that you are not a companion of my solitary hours as well as those dedicated

to *the public*, they shall value my *services* if they get them for I am just in the mood to live as Fran would say in *the Garret* for four or five months. Savannah always dreary at this season of the year is doubly so now, I have been here upwards of a week and have walked home only once our *cavalcade* have not arrived from the upper regions and until they do I shall not inhale much of the *pure* air, for *trudging* does not agree as well with my *constitution (it not being yet formed)* as it did beneath the influence of your bracing atmosphere there a walk is a *treat* here it is a *bore*. – I am just fit for a Connecticut *Farmeress* at this present period for I have not yet relapsed into my old habits and am as *spry* as I was at No 10, I have abandoned the old fashion of having a Waiting man the first step towards a reform Alexander seems to think I will be too *independant* for a Lady but I already experience the salutary effects of running up and down stairs *and waiting upon myself* so do not be alarmed if you should chance to hear you have a *bustling* friend. – I was really in hopes you would not have waited to have heard from me but have written sane ceremonies for I really *long* to hear of you all, a *sketch Book* of your proceedings would prove a bon bouche to me at this time "When evening comes on pinions grey"[2] I in *a reverie* see you all surrounding the parlour fire with your *toes* perched upon the fender and Frances not the least prominent of the group sitting in silence sadly or *bursting* her sides at *her own jokes*. I hope I am no longer the subject of them. I have settled into my usual *calm* after being wafted to & fro upon the gentle gales of pleasure, the sport of many a passing breeze, the good folks predict that some *powerful excitement* will again wind me up to *frenzy* pitch and all my *sage reflections* and *dignified* composure will give way to the merry burst of laughter but I deny the fact that I am *repenting* with all my might and hope your too tenacious memory will prove faithful on my account and that not one of my ridiculous speeches (for I made a thousand) will be registered in the journals of the convent a *roseate* blush mantles my cheek at the recollection of my folly. – I came off in *arrears* to Kelly the Cabinet maker in Fulton Street and it has preyed upon my mind ever since, the debt is one dollar for a pine box, will you cancel it for me as I had much rather be in your debt than his – I will enclose the money the first small New York Bill I can procure. – Did Frances receive any note from the old Ship if she did not, will you send my Collerette which Boquet made and which I think I left in the parlour when I undressed there to Mrs. Gordons care at Mrs. Southarts as I hear she is to be out in January or the

middle of this month – You were no doubt much shocked at hearing of the death of Mr. Howard it was not the fever which terminated his existence but an internal disease the dropsy in the chest he was I understand quite composed and resigned which must be a source of great consolation to his surviving relatives and friends.

Remember us all affectionately to each individual of your family and write soon to your affectionate friend Mary

1. That this letter was written in or before 1832 – and probably in the 1820s – is suggested by Mary Telfair's reference to her brother Alexander.

2. It has proved impossible to identify the source of this phrase.

129 PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, 1 JULY [IN OR BEFORE 1832][1]

I expected dear Mary to have greeted you this evening in New York and feel not a little disappointed that my hopes have been defeated by the illness of Mrs. Campbell who *from the nature of her case* will not be able to travel for some weeks, and there is no prospect of an opportunity offering very soon, I dislike the idea of giving my Brother so fatiguing a ride in this melting weather, and if *Wim* could proffer his services now, they would be joyfully accepted or any other Being *in the shape of a Man* except tell Frances one of our *profession you will see folkes sooner* we shall go for they were to sail last sunday this intelligence you may suppose has made me very *fidgetty* indeed I long for a pair of wings that I might fly to you even if they were *clipped* as soon as I landed – Mrs. Unwin is such a Philosopher that she bears it wonderfully well & is always bringing forward her reasoning powers which are seldom dormant she proposes *enlisting* Hall McAllister by way of *joke* recollecting the french leave we took of him in New Ark I feel particularly anxious to be with you as our stay in New York will not at this time exceed a week or ten days our party will be anxious to get to Saratoga to enjoy *physic* & cool air, indeed I never suffered more from heat in Georgia than I have here and I think unless some attention is paid to the streets it will be very unhealthy, for the gutters are choked with stagnant water which is extremely offensive to my *sensitive* nose. – Uncle Jones's family talk of leaving the City this month which I am very glad of for it is not a desirable place to be in during the summer. When do you commence on your peregrinations? not I hope before we do.

I got a letter from home yesterday and I have been *studying* the wind all

day – Inform Frances that her match in chess Mr. Habersham has matched himself for life to his fair cousin, quite a convenient arrangement and as they are congenial, must be according to the common phrase very happy. – I suppose Frances has made you acquainted with all the Georgians and her descriptions have been interlarded I suspect with *a little satire* particularly the wedding – I have asked Julia Hull a great many questions about her while in Augusta she seems to think Miss Cumming & herself were made of different *metal* from common folkes therefore I fear did not meet with general sympathy – she herself is better qualified for every day enjoyment than any one I know she is not remarkable for any thing but memory & great sweetness of temper, she appears to have a superior mind but it is but the reflection of her Sisters and none but a nice *observer* would discover that she shone with bright light so very imposing is her style of conversation and so collected her manner, being much with her for she is very companionable convinces me that *shew* is all that is necessary to make a woman of common capacity pass for a first rate Genius – it is to the mind what *french courtures* are to the body, for many an ill bred Woman from knowing how to *bend & bow* has been dubbed elegant, without being acquainted with the common forms of politeness – Farewel, I know not now when I shall have the pleasure of seeing you Yours affectionately MT If Mrs. Campbell is well enough by thursday next it is probable we shall leave this on that day – Uncle Jones cannot leave her until she is better.

1. Mary Telfair's reference to her brother Alexander suggests that this letter was written in or before 1832.

130 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 22 AUGUST [IN OR BEFORE 1832][1]

I received your long expected and much wished for letter dear Mary a day or two previous to our departure from Saratoga, and as I had a long and pleasant journey in anticipation delayed answering it until my arrival at the *Athens of America.* I passed my time very *quietly* at Saratoga and (contrary to your prediction) derived no *refreshment* from the parlour – I did not meet with a proficient in "Cheek Music" though I encountered an *Amateur* of it in Mrs. Laight – when we hold a *private* parley I will tell you exactly what I think of her – She is a Character one might study to advantage, and if I could take a retrograde step in the vale of life, and be

what I was ten or twelve years ago – before Time, Reflection & Sorrow had disciplined my feelings, *the study* might be beneficial but now I feel that I am her *Antipodes* in every thing.

We *picked* up Mr. Joyce at Saratoga, and he travelled with us as far as Troy, his *fine sentiments* and *fine language* was lost on me in the Post Coach, for I never could listen to *a still small voice* in my life – There is something in *loud tones* and that *modulation* which feeling gives irresistibility captivating to my untutored ear – without it the finest cheek music loses half its influence – After we *parted* with our reverend friend we pursued our way from Troy to Pittsfield avoiding Lebanon Springs by taking dinner at the village Auberge where neatness and tranquility reigned & where my palate was gratified by plain fare in that respect I was designed for a humble sphere – I cannot dear Mary tell you how frequently I wished that you were the companion of my journey you could have enjoyed with me the sublime views, one in particular would have commanded your warmest admiration for it was *truly Alpine*.

We were delighted with the situation of Northampton it is truly beautiful in the extreme – I have seen as yet but little of Boston – We have visited the Athenaeum and Nahante which looks like a rock in the ocean. Mrs. Gray accompanied us to the latter place yesterday and bounded over the rocks *like a Chamois* while poor I (who can vie with the most alert on level ground) groped my way with as *infirm* a step, as that *poor old Lady* Miss Powell at Sing Sing – I really felt ashamed of my *imbecility* – When we meet I will tell you all about Nahante its iron bound coast and stone Cottages – you ought to have been with us – we have had no amusements but of the simple kind that you might have participated in – we have patronized no balls party's or any of the excitements of artificial life – I saw "*Bronson*" a day or two ago, she was on her way to Newport after *flourishing* at Nahante – I liked her better than I thought I could do for she was *natural* and you may ease your Mammas mind by informing her that she has parted with that indecent *tournure* which in the land of Lilliput might have passed for an immense fortification. – We found the temperature rather cool as we crossed the Mountains & dreaded the effect it might have on Alexander, but he improved daily – the journey has been of such advantage to him that I do not regret going to Saratoga – where he seemed to take fresh cold every night – The changes here are frequent & sudden

but we can defend ourselves better against them by keeping closed doors & windows – I do not think we shall be in New York before September as we intend staying here until after Cambridge Commencement by that time the weather will be cool for the Country – Boston is a century beyond any City I have visited in improvements. The buildings are splendid and things look permanent here – the only thing I have remarked that savors of *far famed Yankee Economy* is a mean little Steamboat that plies between this & Nahante – The manners of the Eastern people I decidedly prefer to the northern or southern, they are so social & conversable. – Sarah has a story to tell you against me which you will think a proof of my extreme sociability – you are *perched* on the top of a mountain in a *Coach & four* like an Eagle in its Eyry, sometimes *trembling* on the side of a *Cattskill looking* precipice and then again *writhing* at seeing the kind horses *squatting* down hill.

Do not answer this letter unless you direct to New York – Sarah & Margaret are *dinning* it into my ear why don't you describe such a person & such a thing to Mary Few – my answers are because I shall have nothing to talk about when I see her if I write it all.

There is *policy* – whenever I am *politic* I always tell it that my friends may not be imposed upon – Love to Frances

1. Mary Telfair's reference to her brother Alexander suggests that this letter was written in or before 1832 – and probably in the 1820s.

131 SUMMERVILLE, GEORGIA, 22 AUGUST [? 1834 OR 1835][1]

Thank you dear Mary for the books you have been so kind as to send us, they have been a delightful treat – my interest in reading has revived a little, but it never can be an absorbing feeling again, indeed all keen enjoyment in every thing in this life is passed away. I read "Scenes in private life" first – the story of "The Hall & Cottage" interested us all.[2] I traced some of my youthful faults in those of Ellen Clare – poor Ellen! her happiness was in *perspective*. The character of the friend Mary reminded me of Jeannie Deans,[3] and Mary Few divested of polish. Sarah seized upon Waylands Sermons[4] – she recommended me to read his Sermon "on the abuse of the Imagination." I have for several years past considered it wholly unprofitable to cultivate the imagination, and I now think with Mr. Wayland that it is sinful to indulge in those visions which have a tendency to

unfit us for two worlds by teaching us to create one of our own. I am now engaged with the Memoirs of Dr. Good[5] his character is a delightful one – so pure, so governed by religious principle.

I am truly sorry to learn the cause of your sudden return to the City, and am happy to find that Frances's native air has had so happy an influence upon her health – I hope Matilda's visit to her favorite Rhinebeck will prove a restorative to her.

I recollect meeting with Miss Foster at Newton (near Boston) several years since – she amused me then, for I thought her sprightly & intelligent but we live to think all that valueless – and to look with compassion upon those whose too eager pursuit of the pleasures and varieties of life seem to preclude reflection and a hope of better things. Oh! what bitter lessons are we taught by Sorrow and Experience before we can disengage our affections from the things of Time & Sense.

After finishing the little story by the author of the twin lambs I almost wished myself again a child that I might reap the advantages of the present day – The finest talents seem now to be consecrated to the improvement of youth and the childrens books daily issuing from the press are so calculated to train the infant mind to "progressive virtue, and approving Heaven."[6]

We are prone to sigh over the errors of education, I confess of late I have been more frequently awakened to a painful consciousness of my deficiencies in firmness and decision of character – It is hard to war against Nature, but I trust with the blessing of Providence that it is not too late to counteract the growth of those weeds which have taken deep root in the desert of my mind.

I hope the weather with you is as pleasant as it is here – for two days past it has been so cool that Catharine and myself have walked at ten in the morning to warm our feet. The want of sleep at night makes me so nervous that I cannot take long walks.

Yesterday we strolled to Governor Milledges former residence – It is a lovely spot, the only place that excites any interest in me on the Hill.[7] The view from it is richly variegated & extensive. The lawn studded with here & there a venerable tree and sufficiently beautiful to attract the attention of a Painter. The distant view of Augusta and the wooded heights of Carolina contrasted strongly with the silence & isolation which reigned within the Mansion, once the seat of hospitality. There is something peculiarly affect-

ing in visiting a deserted place particularly when those who once animated it with their virtues and their talents have gone "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest"[8] – After strolling through the neglected garden, we paused at the melancholy spot where repose the remains of those souls I trust are rejoicing among happy spirits in "a land of pure delight" "where Saints immortal reign," and where tears and sorrow are unknown.[9]

We continue to be very well satisfied with our residence here and have reason to be grateful for an exemption from sickness. Catharine visits occasionally – she passed yesterday, with a friend of hers in Augusta, and is passing this evening with Mrs. Henry Cumming. I am glad whenever she goes out I think {*illegible*} so constantly with us has had a very {*illegible*} influence upon her spirits she has a good deal of sympathy and her character is much improved. We miss her very much, when she is absent though we read more than we talk.

I heard lately from Mary – she says her daughter is very pretty – her own health not very good and her husbands very bad – he is traveling for the benefit of his – Margaret is traveling with him. I do not think she will develop any Telfair traits of character – It is two years nearly since we have seen them – we invited them to visit us here but they declined our invitation. Mr. Cobb is said to be both amiable & intelligent & Mary is devotedly attached to him – I hope for her sake he may regain his health – With love to your Mamma Frances & Matilda I remain ever yours Mary 22nd of August I will get you to subscribe to the New York observer & order it sent by mail to Savannah

1. The probable date of this letter is suggested by Mary Telfair's reference to her grandniece Alberta, who was born in 1833.

2. These may be references to Sarah Stickney Ellis, *Pictures of Private Life* (Philadelphia, 1833).

3. Jenny Deans is a character in Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian.*

4. Perhaps a reference to Frances Wayland, *Sermons delivered at the anniversaries of the American Sunday-School Union* (Philadelphia, 1834).

5. Olinthus Gregory, *Memoirs of the life, writings, and character, literary, professional, and religious, of the late John Mason Good* (London, 1828).

6. Thomson, *The Seasons*, "Spring," line 1158.

7. John Milledge (1757–1818), an eminent Georgia Patriot and close associate of Edward Telfair. Milledge held several prestigious political posts in post-Revolutionary Georgia, including a term as governor. He was also elected on several occasions to the U.S. Congress. Following his retirement from public life in 1809, he retired to his plantation on the Sand Hills, Augusta.

8. Job, 3.17. The original reads, "there the wicked cease from trembling, and there the weary are at rest."

9. Isaac Watts (1674–1748), *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, Book II, hymn 66.

132 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 21 MARCH [IN OR AFTER 1835][1]

Humility that rare blossom in the human heart has taken root just sufficiently deep in mine to make me wonder at your discovering a *panacea* in my stupid letters dear Mary. –

I believe that I used to have bright ideas, but they have all fled, and the wings of my imagination are so clipped that I can fancy nothing but gloom before me in lifes pilgrimage. This dullness thickens so upon *my horizon* that I spend those hours alone which used to be devoted to social confab, in fact I am never "fine for conversation." I made a grand effort to pay Mrs. Wayne a twilight visit two evenings since and found her alone *ready primed.*

She was in *a gay sentimental mood*, if you will allow me an anomaly – she looked piquant, and talked most eloquently. – I like the consistency of her character, for she has never pretended to be any thing but a literary and fashionable character, and has supported the union admirably.

There is nothing more offensive to me than a worldly religious person – talking *good* and acting *bad.* Mrs. McAllister and herself have formed a *junction* like two mighty rivers – They read a play once a week at each others houses their *School* consists of a dozen lovers of Shakespeare – What would good Mrs. Cutler say to this?

It is all innocent perhaps, more so than talking scandal but I think poetry such as Rogers's Italy[2] would be more innocent and leave a purer trace behind – If we were tete a tete dear Mary I could dilate much though my *fireiness* is abated, and though "Heaven first taught letters for some wretches aid" I cannot trust to them for giving utterance to all my opinions. – If the first step towards improvement is to distrust ones self I must be on the rapid march to *perfection*, but alas! my clogs keep me from advancing –

I commenced Le Martine's Pilgrimage[3] and was compelled to send it to the owner just as I became interested in it – I got near Jerusalem, and was surrounded by the plague when I paused – His history is an affecting one – her death deprived him of his reason and he wandered about Switzerland on foot – after his mind was restored he married a widow and she several years after their marriage had a son and a daughter the lovely Julia he so glowingly describes – He is now childless, and seeks in literary resources & Politics a balm to heal the wound – His wife is {*illegible*} keen hearted – They are both Catholics she endeavours to promote the comfort of their tenantry – They have immense Estates but that only tends of course to make them more sensible of their dreariness – Wealth can only prove a temporal balm to the heartless spendthrift – Mr. Birch is still Mrs. McAllisters Hero though a waste of waters separate them – She read his last letter to me it was full of pious thoughts – he is studying for the ministry.

Your account of young Ledyard proves that he is something more than a man of fashion – I was pleased with what I saw of him and hope his loss will be his gain. If I had children I would covet any thing sooner than riches for them – so few Persons know how to make a proper use of them – {*illegible*} prayer ought to be imprinted upon the tablets of every heart.

You know I am a seer and had a fearful foreboding that *something* had "frozen the genial current of your pen"[4] but your cheering letter was welcomed yesterday – it quite warmed my heart and I am truly glad that you have been like a captive bird released from your cage and able again to walk under the clear canopy of Heaven and enjoy the fresh air, and "like the Israelites of old reach your destination *dry shod.*"[5] Now that the days are lengthening I hope to read more. Robert Hall has imbued me with a strong desire to read Gregorys Letters[6] – His eloquent criticism upon them I have read with the deepest admiration his style is much more to my taste than La Martines – He is in *Truth* as powerful a delineator as Walter Scott in Fiction. They both have *Shakespearian force.* – We will when we meet talk about *Brooklyn Colony* – I should like to be within an apples throw of you half the year – I grudge as years increase the time that I am departed from you for I have always had a presentiment that I should not love to be very old, nor do I desire it.

My Cousins & Mrs. Telfair & family are still with us we have numbered very strong all winter – Margaretta is the only one who goes the nightly

round and she is less intoxicated by it than she was last winter. My love – *our* love to your Mamma Fr & M Truly your friend MT

1. The possible year of this letter is indicated by the reference to Lamartine, the day and month, by the postmark.

2. Samuel Rogers, *Italy: A Poem* (London, 1822–1828).

3. Alphonse de Lamartine, *A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land: comprising recollections, sketches, and reflections, made during a tour in the east* (London, 1835).

4. This appears to be a variation on "and froze the genial current of the soul," a phrase found in the thirteenth verse of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard."

5. Possibly a reference to Isaiah, 11.15, which in part reads "and make men go over dry-shod."

6. She may have been referring to Robert Hall, *The Works of Robert Hall, With a brief memoir of his life by Dr. Gregory, and observations on his character as a preacher by John Foster. Published under the superintendence of Olinthus Gregory LL.D.* (London, 1832).

133 FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, 29 OCTOBER [IN OR AFTER 1835][1]

My first thoughts after my arrival in Fayetteville dear Mary turned toward the Post Office, and I was not disappointed for your *thrice* welcome letter arrived to gladden my wearied orbs, upon which the sunrise of joy seldom sheds its radiance. My way worn frame required some *stimulus* stronger than strong tea to give elasticity to its movement, for in truth the old sing sing[2] Cook might have applied to me that compassionate ejaculation which Miss Powell called forth "Poor old Lady"! – For the three last nights I have slept in my clothes so *airy* were our apartments – Cousin Eliza compared me to a Sister of Charity with my black shawl over my head, closely pinned under my chin – The Fleas lacerated my body and the filth sett me on a regimen not the most favorable to the improvement of a Dispeptic viz. Eggs and Potatoes – Margaret says nothing can be eaten with safety upon this road without *a care* – I proposed to her *Sausages* – My *genius* has been *disciplined* my memory exercised by counting miles by day & counting hours at night and keeping upon the alert to read sign boards, and enquire about *cross* roads – Our Carriage was the Pioneer. Peter deserves *the great* added to his name – He has thus far evinced all the cardinal virtues – He seems devoted to our interests & perfectly respectful.

He distinguishes me far above Sarah & Margaret, he will not ask them a question but appeals always to my decision I hope he will not worship me as *a Saint*. A Deer appeared in view this morning – *the Czar* cried out in *extacy* "*Miss Mary a Deer*" presently a beautiful creature with a bell bounded by us.

I have felt more than ever on this journey my want of *manly* qualities. I have often regretted that I was not trained to business & I now add to that regret that I did not learn to manage the restive steed & to fire a pistol. I never had a horror of masculine Women being always sensible of my want of physical strength & courage and to quote from Miss Goddard & Anne Clay "I have passed the age to care about being called a lovely woman." – I should like to be useful to my fellow creatures & myself – my *Ambition* extends no farther –

It is strange that your second letter did not reach me – I am sorry that my silence made you anxious – I was not well in Philadelphia and so depressed that I deferred writing, but never imagine yourself forgotten. I should not like you to know the extent of my regard fearing if Scales could weigh affections, that mine would weigh heaviest.

We were detained four days in Baltimore by *doubtful* weather, and met on board the Norfolk boat several of our acquaintances bound to the South – They took the steamer Leybrook for Savannah I did not envy them – Give me Terra Firma with wretched accommodations – dreary pine woods, & dilapidated towns in preference to Steam upon the briny waves. Life has lost all its poetry to me, and if I can only get along without much rude *jostling* I am satisfied.

I am glad to hear our Newport friends the Evans's have gone to the South – We hope to have them much with us – Her uniform cheerfulness, good sense & good humor, important moral sunshine to all around. She has had no deep afflictions to subdue her joyous spirit – No disappointments to cloud her brow – she is a cheerful happy Christian and knows how to enjoy the gifts of Providence and always to bear in mind from whence they spring.

I have lost all taste for worldly Society even when it is encircled by the rays of intellect – My travelling book is Colton four years in England[3] – I think he is a more dignified writer than Mr. Stewart – I do sometimes trace the Clergyman in his reflections, and the purity of his sentiments.

We are now half way to Savannah, and are pursuing our home occupations at a comfortable Hotel with a private parlor – We have had no cause of uneasiness – our Cavalry are in good condition notwithstanding the heavy sand they have dragged us through – We shall rest here today & tomorrow – I must not omit telling you of one fright – The night we slept at Suffolk we were aroused at nine o clock from our slumbers by the sound of the drum & fife – presently we heard the Virginia jig struck up, and such a *pounding* in the room below, screaming &c &c They continued their revels 2 hours & then went to the next Tavern. The extremes of society meet – for instance the Virginia gig & *Mazerka* & "the *swift Gallopade*" – Fright the Second – In crossing a dilapidated bridge over a river the boards with *chasms* between, Cousin M & myself got *the Shivers* – we both felt faint at the height & looking at the water below – our Carriages went through the ford – however we did not tumble – I never can look down from an eminence without being giddy – It shews that the humble valley suits me better than the lofty mountains. I believe I have given you a faithful portraiture of our journey through the Wilderness – After we leave here we shall be among the civilized until we reach Augusta where we shall tarry a day. I wish to call & see Mrs. Campbell and a few others who shewed us kindness while we sojourned on the Hill. All our party unite in remembrance to your Mamma & Self – I rejoice to hear dear little Mary is improving. I will write to Frances from Savannah. Truly yours MT

1. The reference to Colton's book indicates that this letter was written in or after 1835.
2. Sing Sing (now Ossening), New York.
3. Calvin Colton (1789–1857), *Four Years in Britain, 1831–1835* (New York, 1835).

134 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 17 FEBRUARY [AFTER 1834][1]

I believe that you are in *arrears* to me a letter or *two* my dear Mary, but as *etiquette* is not an ingredient of my nature, I yield myself a willing victim to the impulse which prompts me to hold a little colloquy with you. I am all alone – Mrs. Campbell & Margaret are in Sarahs room who was suddenly attacked yesterday with a pleuretic affection – This morning I prevailed upon her to send for Dr. Waring who bled her profusely & ordered a blister – the drawing of which with the previous depletion seems to have arrested the disease & I hope that she will be quite herself again in a day or

two – What bodily suffering Mrs. Cutler has endured since I wrote to you the *wonderful news* – I felt, though *unversed* in the nature of her *case*, a fear that a *sturdy* frame and abundant health would militate against her and so it proved – but I rejoice to hear that her valuable life has been preserved to her husband though disappointed in their expectations – *the worst of all disappointments*.

If the lives of those we most love are spared – we ought to bear up under disappointments & endeavor to say with the Apostle I have learned ["]in whatsoever situation I am placed therewith to be content["][2] – and yet how prone we are to sigh for what might bring misery with it. Contentment is truly a blessing from above, for the natural man cannot possess it – the want of it caused our first Parents to transgress and we have daily instances of the evils springing from discontent. I believe that we never learn to live in the present until the future and the past are veiled in impenetrable clouds – When we cease to look forward and look back only to regret misspent time – then we are improving I cannot say with you that childhood was not a happy period with me – I was *too happy*, and yet I was subject to extremes of gaiety & sadness – and my early youth was a pleasant dream but I will not revert to that – We have often compared notes on that subject and found that we kept pace in changes of sentiments and feelings.

I find that you hear a little gossip occasionally without having me to kindle it with the aid of *Lightwood*. Never shall I forget the Tableau between her and the old Beau Stewart – it was a *mournful* specimen of *ancient* worldlings figuring upon a stage that they ought to have retired from before Times nipping frosts had assailed them. –

I am philanthropic enough to be pleased to hear of Genl. Waynes devotion to his Bride and her domestic felicity but the little Girls kneeling to her new Mamma was an artificial aspect – similarly situated I would rather she would have boxed my ears and regretted it, after kind treatment had subdued her spirit – Depend upon it that there are no children now a days. I believe the abolishing of Nurserys is one cause of precocity and womanly attire another – I am a great friend to Pantalettes, caps – aprons – Alberta, Marys child sits up until ten every night, and already talks of her beau – I tell them that she will be an old woman at fifteen. – Anna Bridgen uttered a *truism* when she said that Parents in this country *cheated* childhood of its joys.

Have you had tidings of dear excellent Mrs. Banyier & how is she? and how does she get along in the old world? – Did you hear of Anne Cumming's *almost* shipwreck – she proved herself a Heroine & Genl Smith a Hero – he took the Helm when the Captain said they must all perish, and she with christian resignation prepared her mind to sink into a watery grave.

I heard of Frances being in Philadelphia thro my Cousins I wish the spirit of enterprise would lead her here. I hope that Mary is improving. I have fancied your Mamma & yourself occupying each side of the chimney corner – "the world forgetting" but not "by the world forgot"[3] – Pascal says we ought to learn to live alone, for we must die alone.[4] It is easy to talk but difficult to act. It is very desirable to sett to every thing here, just interested enough in the concerns of life to perform our duties.

I have got Morascall but his gossip does not interest me – when you condescend to gossip I enjoy it for yours has a *peculiar flavour*. Shall I call it *attic* gossip. With a great deal of love to your Mamma I remain truly your friend MT

1. The dating of this letter is suggested by Mary Telfair's reference to her grandniece Alberta.

2. Philippians, 4.11.

3. Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, line 207.

4. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (1670), Section III, *Of the Necessity of the Wager*, 211. The exact citation reads, "We are fools to depend upon the society of our fellow-men. Wretched as we are, powerless as we are, they will not aid us; we shall die alone."

135 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 23 APRIL [IN OR AFTER 1834][1]

A tremendous cold confines me to the House, and in lieu of my customary exercise in the open air I turn to your society as a balm for aches & pains – After this preface you will patiently endure stupidity – I have been trying to collect some native plants for you but after setting out a variety only three or four have survived I am losing any talent alias *luck* in planting – I wish you could take a peep at the roses in our Court – Lees perpetual and the white daily are beautiful We had a theft committed one moonlight night and offered 5 dolls reward to either of our servants who would discover the Thief but their efforts were fruitless – There is a regular system of stealing plants for exportation kept up – Judge Wayne traced his

& recovered them – What a world it is? Poor Miss Henry sailed a few days since – her relatives here thought her mind sadly deranged but when she called to take leave of us she seemed quite herself – I was very much interested in her – she appears to be so amicable & affectionate – your description of the *little Witch* of West Point in Tableau amused us much – How can Parents permit their daughters to exhibit in such scenes – Is it not surprising that with all the improvements in female education that the character of {*illegible*} does not improve – The love of notoriety seems more conspicuous than ever – Mary Wayne is the gayest character in Savannah and the most healthy looking girl in the Place – Her Parents are delighted with the change – They have never contradicted her in any respect – are people happier for having their own way – young persons I am satisfied are not – I have an example of it in Berta – her wishes are boundless because they have never been restrained – What a pity that the Bolton system of education was but not more prevalent – with my present view on the subject I think it cruel to launch a young girl into fashionable life when they can be so much happier out of it – and after all it is not society, but bustle and excitement. I was very slightly acquainted with Mrs. Potter but the impression that she made upon me was most favorable – she must have been a rare combination of talent & virtues – Emma Gardiner was very much affected at hearing of her death – she was intimate with her and I should think that Anne Clay would feel it very much – Tom Clays Wife & son have been for the last fortnight on a visit to the Habershams – I hear that Jones Clay is a noble looking child & an idol in the family – I think his arrival in this world of cares & sorrows ought to reconcile {*illegible*} to the match – Eliza I believe came round pretty soon – Perhaps she suits her better than the sort of Woman they would have liked – she leans upon him entirely & all men like that – such Women make for the best wives but not the best Mothers, for the *cardinal* virtues of decision & energy are all important to the training of children – and then if they chance to become *widows* – the beautiful trait of consistency is often wanting – every character ought to be self balanced – she is young and in so good a school that she must improve. I should think Eliza's example would have a most happy influence. – I received a long and affectionate letter from Mrs. Gray a few days since introducing some of her Boston friends to us – Our climate attracts a great many invalids from the Eastward every winter – some benefit from the change but many return

as they came. Mrs. McAllister is kept on the *qui vive* as Patron, guide, entertainer and *factotum*. I never saw such a Woman – she lives a year in a month and day in an hour – I wish that she would give me of her Elixir for I have lost my interest in everything but old friends, books, and nature – C (who inspires me with a similar feeling to that Blue Beard did as a child) has taken Alfred under his *paternal* wing – what a *wing* I would never put a child under a Vultures – He forms {*illegible*} own character upon the model of the {*illegible*} Philosophers and I suppose he will make a young Alcibiades – We have seen a {*illegible*} to you in Mrs. Putnam of Boston – in everything she is young & beautiful – I was saying that of all women who have crossed {*illegible*} for years I have met with no one {*illegible*} to my taste as Mrs. Robt. Bolton – It {*illegible*} now a days to take sudden fancies it requires years to effect what days formerly accomplished. This I suppose is one of the woes of Time – may others follow in its train before "the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl broken"[2] – Have you seen Jabez's *published* intention in a Washington paper of exploring the Holy {?*land*} – his whole route Mrs. Wayne tells me was {*illegible*} out – so I suppose he intends to write a {*illegible*} *if his constitution improves* – I am so {*illegible*} that I cannot even *hate* him – {*illegible*} *luxuriates* in her aversion {*illegible*} to Frances – tell her I believe [?*she has*] forgotten how to write – Our Coachman [?*told*] me once that he had traveled so much that he lost his knowledge, so that he could not sign his name – she has not the same *irish* excuse Truly yours MT

1. Mary Telfair's reference to her grandniece Alberta places the date in or after 1834.

2. This is a slightly misremembered version of "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken," which is to be found in Ecclesiastes, 12.6.

136 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 24 FEBRUARY [IN OR AFTER 1835][1]

I believe that you are in arrears to me a letter my dear Mary, but we do not stand upon ceremony. It is a long time since I heard from you, so long that I feel anxious about you and sometimes fear that you are indisposed or like myself too dull and moping to take pen in hand. – We continue to have a housefull Henry Ritchie leaves us in the course of a week for the north – my Cousins will remain until April & Mrs. Telfair I am inclined to think will not go to her house keeping before the autumn. Our winter has passed

in *Homestead* retirement – Margaret L is the only pleasure seeker in the house, the only one who *takes tea out.* Her health is quite good & spirits buoyant – Mary looks & feels as old as I do – she is very delicate though I think may with care get along as her Mother has done whose health at her age was worse – Have you been to any more lectures upon Geology – I do not like the subject for I am told that it has a tendency to *bewilder* the brain & create a belief that five worlds existed before the present. I have read Mr. Channings work on slavery[2] – It is as feeble as his own little body – I cannot imagine from what source he drew his information – The reply to it by Austin[3] of Boston I admire exceedingly It displays more depth of argument as well as intellect than the production of "the Addison of the Age." – We concurred in opinion that he talked pleasantly and seemed all simplicity in heart and manner Wise as a serpent I cannot add "harmless as a dove"[4] – I hear from those who know him that he is a complete visionary, very ignorant of the world, and quite unsettled in his religious opinions.

I saw young Ledyard here – he was a boy when we saw him at Fishkill – I had no recollection of his face but remembered his Mothers perfectly – He seems to be amiable (and to use Mr. Stewarts favorite word) *genteel.*

The Indian War is the all exciting subject I feel for the poor deluded creatures & for the brave spirits who have gone to subdue them but I cannot *dream of laurels* as some do & talk of it as a thing of wondrous "pomp and circumstance." I might as well live like Lady Hester Stanhope on the top of Mount Lebanon for all the interest I take in the passing events of the day. My enthusiasm is so completely deaf that nothing could rekindle it.

How have you stood the intense cold of the North? We have had too little of it to brace us – You recollect Margarets *speck* upon her nose – It became so vitiated that she followed Dr. Physics advice & got Dr. Waring to take it off which he did with great ease, she has been *room-ridden* for a week or two but hopes to have her strip off in a few days and *look* herself again. You have not mentioned Mrs. Banyier & Miss Jay in any of your letters – do when you see them remember me to them both. I often think of the pleasant hours I passed last summer in their society, so superior to any we had in Newport – the Wheatons & themselves rise like green shoots in memorys waste And our kind friends the Evans's must not be omitted. You will not permit your friend the Newport Poetess to pass unnumbered among the few choice spirits she encountered.

I hope Frances's exile is over I would have written but knew not when a letter would find the Rover – I hope Mary is quite well again & Willie all you desire – With love to all I remain most truly yours Mary

1. The dating of this letter is indicated by Mary Telfair's statement that she had read Austin's defense of slavery in response to Channing's tract.

2. William Ellery Channing, *Slavery* (Boston, 1835).

3. James Trecothick Austin, *Remarks on Dr. Channing's Slavery. By a Citizen of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1835).

4. Matthew, 10.16.

137 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 30 JANUARY [? 1837][1]

I was truly glad dear Mary to discover from your last letter, that you had again become a *voyager* – it proves to me that you are as enterprising as you are *fertile in expedients* – It must be terrific to view the white capped waves & feel the motion of the boat crossing the ferry in a high wind. I do not wonder at Mrs. Cutlers recollections of our mild climate – It is a privilege to enjoy such an one for six months – I fear that I am not sufficiently grateful to the giver of all goods for this, as well as for other blessings.

I have no enjoyment in any thing here beyond the beauties of nature & the society of my friends. I look out of the Library window upon the bright foliage of the Magnolia and the wild orange with the sun glittering upon them, and though no "spicy breezes" blow, soft as those "O'er Java's Isle"[2] still by going into the woods we can inhale the odour of the aromatic pine, and six weeks hence the yellow Jasmine will throw its fragrance over the wild. I wish Frances could be tempted to bring Mary to pay us a spring visit. I cannot but think in opposition to her Physician that it would benefit the latter. Mrs. Campbell thinks at her age a throat complaint is not alarming. Genl. Smith has gone to Cuba for the same complaint – We have been engaged lately in reading Dick's treatise upon covetousnes[3] he does not say too much against it – I believe it to be the most common vice of human Nature and even Christians are not exempt from its influence – We must covet something, if it is not wealth & honors that excite our desires, it is something that is unattainable. If we could only bear in mind, and fully realise the truth of the following verse of a beautiful hymn we should not sigh for any worldly good that is not in our possession –

Not all the good which Earth bestows
Can fill the craving mind
Its highest joys have mingled woes
And leave a sting behind[4]

Our winter has glided on in the same quiet way that yours has – I have not taken my usual quantum of exercise owing to a constant succession of colds – I have not been to Church for three weeks & to day I am confined to my *Lilliput* with a sore throat – Sarah who measures my cheerfulness now, with what it was, says it is nervous – I believe if I was to have a thousand complaints she would say it was want of interest in life. When I spent sleepless nights in New York it was talking with Mary Few now it is talking with Mrs. Campbell, but I do not think Mrs. Campbell an exciting companion though an interesting one – she is playful at time, but her usual manner is very calm & her conversation serious. Mrs. Telfair has at last returned to her home with Mary and her child a week since – I really wish they understood something of domestic management, but I have arrived at this conclusion, that we can do nothing for the *thriftless* – What a precious gift is judgment – It is all important for women who have to act for themselves to cultivate it – if Nature has not given it – from the want of it people are made suspicious for they trust to those who are undeserving of confidence and actually in the end lose all power of discrimination & Few very few women are capable of taking a stand and *boldly* asserting their rights. She wants decision and that *fearlessness* which is requisite when we are in the right – Intuition I believe carrys me along for I have no *manly* qualities to support me when surrounded by *petty* difficulties – I believe the grand secret is to want nothing that your means cannot gratify – never to incur debt or spread out ones interests – Some people live *an age* in a few years – others grow old without reflecting upon consequences. I am truly grateful for the influence that restrained & guided me through the devious paths of youth & for a disposition always willing to yeild to be convinced of error. Dear Mary I must say farewell with much love to your Mamma. Truly yours MT

1. This letter was probably written in or after 1837, given the publication date of Dick's pamphlet and the fact that Mary Telfair is known to have written to Mary Few on January 30 in both 1835 and 1836. Inventory of William Few Collection.

2. From Reginald Heber's hymn "From Greenland's Icy Mountains" (1819).

3. Thomas Dick, *An Essay on the sin and the evils of covetousness: and on the happy effects which would flow from a spirit of Christian beneficence: illustrated by a variety of facts, selected from sacred and civil history, and other documents* (New York, 1836).

4. This hymn can be found in its entirety in *Church Psalmist, Or Psalms and Hymns For the Public, Social And Private Use of Evangelical Christians.* There are many editions of this work; see for example, that published in New York in 1856.

138 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 16 NOVEMBER [IN OR AFTER 1838][1]

We left Philadelphia my dear Mary on the day appointed and were truly fortunate in reaching our home in three days and a half – It seemed like the flight of a bird so rapidly were we whirled along by cars & steamers – The Sun shone brightly and the winds were hushed into a calm the morning we commenced our journey and we glided along the waters of the Chesapeake as tranquilly as if it had been a narrow silver stream – We merely stopped at Portsmouth to take breakfast and then proceeded on in the cars, and took the coaches at night by way of interregnum when the rail road was not completed – once we got upon a sump and Juddy screamed out "*we are over*" – poor Juddy had not been accustomed to such buffettings as we have moreover *coach riding* being a novelty to her unsophisticated nature. – She tells her *comrades* here that she was very much pleased with her northern summer – every body was kind to her – I hope that it will be an inducement to her to repeat it – We never compel any of them to do what will make them unhappy. – We had an accession to our party Mrs. & Miss Rutledge the latter a kindred spirit to Mrs. Banyier was charmed with her mind, character, and manners – none of that ridiculous pride which characterizes the *aristocracy* of Carolina. Religion has given the finishing touch to a character naturally lovely – I should like you to know her she is a woman after your own heart – There is an atmosphere about some people that reflects excellence – we feel our moral natures as much vivified after being with them as our physical after we leave the cold sides of broad way for the sunshine on the other or the cold north winds for the balmy South which now breathes a second spring – The shrubbery is as green as when we left it, and the weather delightful.

We met Mr. Legare[2] in the Steam boat and enjoyed his "*colloquy divine*" for several hours. – He is very brilliant in conversation but a complete man of the world – It is impossible for a public character and a Belle to possess

a heart – Where will you say is Mary Telfairs *mantle of Charity*? One of "the woes that wait our age" is to be able to read too clearly the volume of human nature[3] – Frances's *precocity* in that respect gave her the advantage over us – Your dream has been realized or rather I have interpreted it – The *Monkey* was the only thing that made me laugh on my journey – never commend me for tact again. I have forfeited all claims to it. – which the following *narrative* will fully testify. Curwen (good soul) {*illegible*} rather good *body* thinking one man to seven women was literally a fulfillment of prophecy brought a friend of his into the Cars to introduce to us as a *Help* on the journey having the evening previous given me a biographical sketch of his friend in the *Briggs* style – "clever man – lost his wife in the Pulaski" – Without looking at him I bowed with my veil down & after we landed a man not exactly comme il faut in appearance approached me with an air of brusqueness and said do you keep on in the boat – I replied yes – are you the agent No I am the person Mr. Curwen introduced to you in the car – I lost my *balance* and {*illegible*} *at random* – He gave me his arm and we trudged off together I was shocked yet internally convulsed with the ludicrous position I occupied – He shewed himself a man of sense not to keep aloof after my unfortunate blunder and was really useful helping us up and down the steps of the van and carving for us at table – Let me know when you answer this letter if you think me any thing of a Daniel or Joseph in my interpretation of dreams.

We found Mrs. Telfair & Alberta much better than we expected – The fortitude of the former is wonderful – Margaret was very much distressed at their meeting – Catharine Bulloch has been several times to see us and as kind & affectionate as ever – I feel that she is as much my strong hold in Savannah as you are in New York – I value my friends more every day of my life – It is the only feeling that Time & sorrow has not subdued. My Cousins seem to take much interest in our society in Philadelphia that I reproached myself for sending longing lingering thoughts so often to ninth st. Although I love and admire them so much I do not feel the same point of congeniality as with Frances & yourself – They are like cloistered nuns while I feel that as long as we live we ought to exercise our social feelings. Sometimes when I am wearied & disappointed and feel the insufficiency of all earthly things to make me happy I think for a moment I could shut myself out entirely from the world – but reflection with its busy train whis-

pers it is wrong – We have but a short journey at best to perform on earth and why murmur at the dispensation of Providence sent in merely to wean us from what is perishable and to turn us to what is far beyond the joys of earth. Love to your Mamma Truly yours MT

1. This letter can be dated in or after 1838 by Mary Telfair's reference to the *Pulaski* disaster.

2. Hugh Swinton Legare (1797–1843), the eminent South Carolinian lawyer and politician.

3. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, 2.98.1. The original reads "woes that wait on age."

139 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, N.D., RECD. ON BOARD THE *CLINTON* [? 1838][1]

This is not a letter my dear Mary but a *notification* that the promised Hams have been shipped this morning in the Brig *Clinton* which is to sail on Monday next – There are seven in the box five for you and two for Francis also a jar of oranges for Frances – You had better open the box immediately and have the Hams sunned – They are very rich cured but may not arrive in as good preservation as I could wish – I wish that you were here to enjoy our beautiful spring weather – Our Jasmine vine in the court which encircles a tall Magnolia is filled with flowers and Bees – Emma Gardiner came yesterday to look at it by the light of day her visits are generally of an evening when she brings her work – I am delighted with her & cannot believe that she belongs to the *house* of Tudor – she unites great refinement of mind to uncommon piety & love of literature consistent, amiable & disinterested – she is a great friend of Mrs. Banniers – They correspond I believe.

There is something in the character of the higher order of Yankees very sterling. They *amalgamate* well with Southerners for they have just that sort of prudence that we want – If I had life to go over I should like to be educated in Boston for it seems to me it takes half of life in this country to arrive at that degree of discipline with which they commence life. "The Housekeepers *at home*" en masse live & die without understanding *order* & *economy* – Miss Gardiner & myself had a *twin* talk last night on the subject of riches – she agrees with me in thinking that the only people who ought

to have wealth are those who dispense it judiciously – what would become of the *hoarders* and *squanderers* if I was a Queen.

I have passed this winter in the Chimney corner – I never expected *once* to live to say that there is a charm in dullness – I who used to live upon excitement now feel that a course of Lectures was too much dissipation for me – I had to give up Dr. Wolfes from a severe cold and wound up with Mr. Buckingham[2] with a violent sick head ache – I was deeply interested in his course on Palestine though there was much to object to as well as to admire – I think with Dr. Channing[3] that lectures have their uses – they lead to enquiry and promote a desire for knowledge – Mr. B's lecture on Tyre was a complete fulfilment of the prophecies contained in the 25 26 & 27 Chapters of Ezekiel.

I have just finished "a tale of the Huguenots"[4] – It is sweetly told there is something in unvarnished truth that always finds its way to the heart – Madame La Fontaine as a Heroine far excels any sketched by the pen of Romance and her husband was worthy of such a wife. I never scarcely read a history in which the providence of God seemed so conspicuous their various trials were borne with such sweet resignation – they only served to increase their faith and dependance upon the Giver of all good – La Fontaines *expedients* to gain a living exceed any that you or I could devise.

As my walking hour has arrived dear Mary I will bid you adieu for the present with love from our trio your affectionate friend Mary

1. Mary Telfair's reference to the "tale of the Huguenots" indicates a date of in or after 1838.

2. James Silk Buckingham (1786–1855), the English author and traveler. There is no record of which of his many works she was reading.

3. The Reverend William Ellery Channing (1780–1842).

4. *A Tale of the Huguenots; or, Memoirs of a French Refugee Family. Tr. and comp. from the original manuscripts of James Fontaine [b. 1658] by one of his descendants [Ann Maury] With an introduction by F. L. Hawks* (New York, 1838).

140 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 15 DECEMBER [IN OR AFTER 1840][1]

Your letter dear Mary furnished food for thought after I finished the perusal of it – how very just are your remarks on the condition of Woman in a *passive* state of existence, and yet how difficult her course as an active

Agent (alias Steward) – how often disappointed and deceived by those for whom her exertions are made – still it is better to be *jostled* without than to be quiescent within a *cloistered Retreat*. I think (entre nous) that there is very little medium in unmarried Women – they are apt to sink into entire listlessness, or to be too busy in the concerns of others – I was forced into a train of reflection by the history of a Lady in Carolina who was adopted by the friend of her Mother – this Lady was without a child but confined to her bed for years with an incurable disease – her adopted daughter watched her and devoted her time thought & affection to her afflicted friend – she died lately and left a splendid establishment & *fourteen* servants – 170 thousand dollars in Bank Stock to this adopted daughter – who lives *alone* and whose grief is so great for the loss of her *only* friend that she shuts herself up in her splendid mansion and her fourteen Plagues annoy her incessantly – During a violent Thunderstorm last summer she seated herself on the stair case as a Place of refuge – What is wealth but an evil to such people those who earn a scanty subsistence by the sweat of their brow are far more to be envied than the forlorn & solitary possessor of wealth without the talent for diffusing – for it is a talent to know how to distribute it judiciously – I heard of Mr. Ward's death before your letter arrived through Anne Clay – you mentioned that it was a humiliating death – in what way? Mrs. Francis writes that he was anxious for death and seemed to have been in a state of preparation for the solemn event – I believe that he was a very good man and a most benevolent one – Anne Clay thinks that he was a conscientious Christian – It is always sad to hear of a family left without a head most especially when surrounded by the snares of Affluence or penury. – the extremes meet – I pity those Girls in such a City as New York filled with native & *exotic* fortune hunters. Julia is full of talent – but that is not *common sense* – do you know that I think it equal to second sight to Women placed in certain positions – We have been reading Mrs. Lee's life of Martin Luther[2] – it is a very sweet production – I continually associate Luther with Dr. Franklin – You must read the Book for I think there are some Master strokes of feeling in it – Sarah is reading Nicolas Nickleby[3] and is delighted with it – I do not feel any more disposed for a humorous work than for *a Tea Party* – I never was in my gay days fond of humorous reading, I loved it passionately in conversation but it has lost its charm completely even as a spice in that ingredient. Margaret came across "*the Englishman*" we

{*illegible*} in Newport – I was surprised at *our* humor for I thought it had been extinguished in me before that period – The sight of Whitfields *"Fly Trap"* seemed to have aroused it in you. – I have concluded that Newport air is requisite to inspire some folks with *poetic ardor*.

You enquire how the Clays got home – Anne said that they were delighted with the Wilmington route – They came without *a Man* or Man Servant – how desirable it is to be able to act independantly of the Lords of creation – I *commenced too late to ride alone in an Omnibus* – which is the acme of my courage – Much love to Frances – I could enjoy a *weekly* talk with her in the charming corner – Remember us affectionately to your Mamma write soon and let me know your cogitations – if you have nothing to write about Do mention the Bridgens – I shall never forget *their lemon juice tea*. I have tried to get Mrs. Terry on education[4] at the Book Store here, but she is not extant. How very quickly she has passed away. Do when you travel downwards in your morning rambles give a call on Miss Rushford and ask her if she received my letter & draught on Messrs. Fox, Bolton & Livingstone – Adieu affectionately your Mary

1. The dating of this letter is indicated by Mary Telfair's reference to Lee's book.

2. Hannah Farnham Sawyer Lee, *The Life and Times of Martin Luther* (Glasgow, 1840).

3. Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickelby* (London, 1838).

4. It has proved impossible to locate this work.

141 N.P., N.D. [1841 OR 1842][1]

The Omnibus

The praise of the Omnibus I sing
'Tis such a glorious independant thing –
It lessens distance by its wondrous speed
And to the wearied proves a friend indeed
These old acquaintances we often greet
And much loved friends with great delight we meet
Tis true the Canaille gentle folks annoy
But where is comfort found without alloy?
Not on this wide Earths fair, and ample bound

Can pleasure free from Sorrow long be found
A picture it presents of human life
Its *up's and downs* – its toil and strife –
All classes seek this wonder of the age
The high, the low, the silly, and the sage –
Fit emblem of our democratic nation
Where no regard is paid to rank or station –
The Laundress there her basket holds with care
Next to the States Man proud with lofty air
The hapless Emigrant from Erins shore
In filthy garb and miserably poor
Sits next a belle in pride of youthful bloom
Deck'd in a velvet hat and waving plume
Ye Patrons then continue to be kind
And always bear the Omnibus in mind

If you think my doggerel will not disgrace your "Whisperer" my dear Mary you may give it a place – I am too stupid to produce any thing better – I require an inspiring Genius to write with me – I quite long to receive the numbers that have been read – let me know how you conduct it, that I may *fancy* myself one at the table when it is read – It is strange that at the very time that your Mamma was wishing for us – we were wishing to be in 9th street. I feel more than usually alone at that season when family meetings are going on.

Catharine Bulloch invited me to dine with her & Mrs. Wimberly Hunter the gentleman of the family having spent the day out of town but I declined – We also declined Mrs. Telfair It is a custom with us to cook a large dinner for our servants each has the privilege of inviting their friends – so they keep the festival and are made happy by it – I cannot recal the joyous feelings of my youth when Christmas, New Years day and the 4th of July gladdened my heart – So it is, we hardly know what we were but we know what we are – Our lives are like a chain link after link is broken until we feel that there is nothing to live for – I determined to read a great deal this winter but I have done very little in that way – I took up a newspaper a few days since and read a paragraph that I am sure will delight you – Friend

Gurney my beau ideal of all that is beautiful and lovely in character spent 20,000 dollars in donations while in this country – He must enjoy a high seat in Heaven – It is so delightful to meet with a christian free from Sectarian prejudices. What an example to some of our Episcopal friends – I had here yesterday morning the wife of an Episcopal Clergyman to teach purse making with a tambour needle – she is working to assist in saving her husbands church from the hammer – she gave her dower 5000 dollars towards it, and made 100 dollars last year from her needle – When I meet with such folkes I am dissatisfied with my inertness – Sarah says that you might tell the *great* Washington[2] that she followed his prescription for her ear and her ear is almost well – she thinks that it was more dispeptic than nervous – Her health is better than it has been for years – I regret to hear that Mary Chrystie's health continues so delicate[3] – Why does not Frances consult Dr. Washington about bringing her to the South I cannot but think that it will benefit her materially – Tell her to pack up and bring Mary & Mr. Chrystie too – We will give *separate* apartments *if necessary* not being such an enemy to them as Judge C – and Cozens – Tell Frances to bring her *shabbiest in costume* to keep us in company for we live in our old moasslines *aged three years* – so secluded are our lives – Say to Frances that Mary can ride on Netas little "*mar*" being "*a right oomans cretur*" and she with our trio can make caps and ride among the evergreens – I have turned *Architect* and am building new houses for our people and superintending a vegetable garden but nothing prospers at the south – The sloth of the sable population and the heat war against improvements physical, moral and intellectual – Tell Frances that we shall be ready to receive her whenever she comes – your friend Mary

1. The fact that the poem was intended for *The Whisperer* and the reference to the ill health of Mary Few Chrystie indicate that these were written in 1841 or 1842.

2. Dr. Washington of New York City.

3. Mary Few Chrystie died in Nice in the winter of 1842. Johnson, *Mary Telfair*, 262.

142 SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, 29 [?] [? 1843 OR 1844][1]

My faith in *presentiment* dear Mary has been greatly strengthened by the appearance of your well known superscription last evening. I said in

the morning to Margaret, I feel that there is a letter in store for me from Mary Few this evening, and so it was, that as I sat in the Portico inhaling "the sweet South" and watching the soft dews of twilight steal over shrubb and flower, your letter was handed me. I plead guilty to the charge of *Epistolary defalcation*, and am surprised to hear that I have poured out my thoughts to my *Confessor* but seven times this winter.

You must acknowledge that I have been most prompt in response to yours, though they have been "few and far between". I have lost my talent for extracting those sweets from passing flowers to freight my *"light barque"* which no longer *"scuds before the breeze"* for its sails are torn and "ruins plough" has gone over it. I want to be trenovated by your converse nothing here atones for the want of it. We only wait on Sarah's account to hear that the weather is settled at the north to leave. I wish to pass a little while with Cousin M in Philadelphia it will be a great trial to me to go there but it will be a comfort to her to see us – she wrote a most affecting letter to Margaret to say that she was calm & composed, she could not say resigned she writes that the last look *she* gave haunts her continually, and that the last conversation they held together was about us. For three weeks Mary R watched by her bed side with unremitting care, no anodyne could bring that balm to the wretched so anxiously sought – sleep refused its soothing influence, and even Strangers who never saw her became interested in their situation. The disposer of events, for wise purposes has permitted her to survive the dreadful blow that he inflicted perhaps to turn her thoughts & affection from Earth & Earthly objects to himself. I agree with you in thinking that Mr. Freedlinhussens election to the Vice Presidency will be a good thing for our Country[2] – a Christian Ruler is always desirable – We want such men in power to redeem a nation from those calamities produced by party spirit and intrigue – Times are changed since you & I used to mount the fence at Greenwich and call out to the passers by – *Federalist* or *Republican* – now it is *Whig* or *Democrat* – Do you remember one Man replied to our question Tory – that ought to have silenced us but we kept up the nightly cry for some time until I suppose our *political endeavour* was quenched. I spent yesterday with Catharine Bulloch – she seems *contented* and sometimes cheerful – *Her* children are a source of perpetual interest to her – Johnny her nephew caught the fish & crabs for dinner Lydia raised

the chickens. Martha keeps a regular school for the two younger girls and makes herself very useful. The garden looked sweetly, and the old moss covered oaks may vie with some of those that grace the ancestral domains of England.

The scene is often peaceful without but within corroding cares and sorrows prey. This world can never be to her what it has been, there is blight upon every thing around her and I do pity her. If she had not faith to support her what would be her condition – she has natural buoyancy derived from her Irish ancestry, which nothing can entirely efface. I sent you a paper containing an original letter from the author of Ossians Poems. I have a curious old story for you to read relative to a *very great* uncle of mine who as a minister of the kirk was called upon to lay a ghost! I do not think that he was *a Seer*. I lent Stilling to C Bulloch she is delighted with it and her children reced it with the same shout that they would devour a Romance. My admiration is unbounded so much so that I expect Catharine who in gayer hours than the present dubbed me *Mary Lamb* will change it to *Mary Stilling*. Where we had fifty jokes we meet & part now without one. Our little *Ewe Lamb* returns to Montpellier for another term.[3] Mrs. Sukely may be quoted on this occasion "every thing has its opposites." I have some objections to the school, but there is a moral & religious training there that she might not have at a more refined school and after all what is education if it does not fit one for the practical duties of life. I wish no one that I am interested in to make a *shew* in life. *Shewy* people are like tinsel, they soon tarnish and it is a sort of *besetment* with me to look upon them as I do upon counterfeit coin. Berta is very plain spoken but I do not check it, so much do I dislike dissimulation. Truth is the best motto one can have. if it only regards the world – it is the best policy. I never yet saw *double* dealing succeed – you have reason to be thankful that your charge possesses an ingenuous disposition – *it* is a jewell beyond all price. We expect to sail on the 13 in the Augusta & go immediately to Philadelphia to pass a week with Cousin M – you think the rail road way would be too severe for Sarah Haig who is very feeble – though she makes great {*word missing*} she has been quite unwell in consequence of going twice to church on Sunday, and walking home in the heat.

I will write again before I leave dear M with best love to your Mama & Fr remembrance to Mr. C & W also Miss Bayard & Matilda very truly yours

1. The dating of this letter is suggested by the reference to Theodore Frelinghuysen.

2. Theodore Frelinghuysen (1787–1862), trained as a lawyer, was in 1828 elected as an Anti-Jacksonian senator from New Jersey. In 1844 he was the unsuccessful Whig candidate for vice-president on the ticket with Henry Clay. Frelinghuysen was active in many religious organizations and for some time served as a vice-president of the Colonization Society. Towards the end of his life he was president of Rutgers College.

3. A reference to her grandniece Alberta.

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MT = Mary Telfair

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